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Emmie Grevener Harrison

The first English Page.

Presented by Mrs. Williamson

July 26th 1883





THE NEW BRIDGE, ST. PETERSBURGH

Vincent Brodsky Lith

SKETCHES OF
RUSSIAN LIFE
AND CUSTOMS,

MADE DURING A VISIT IN 1876-7.

BY

SELWYN EYRE.



London :
REMINGTON AND CO.,
5, ARUNDEL STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1878.

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PREFACE.

THE simple Preface—that I have only in the following pages sought to delineate facts and pictures as they have been presented to my view—that I have not trenched unduly upon the imagination.

THE AUTHOR.

MARCH, 1878.



SKETCHES OF
RUSSIAN LIFE AND CUSTOMS
MADE DURING A VISIT IN 1876-7.

CHAPTER I.

ALEXANDROVNA—A RUSSIAN CUSTOM-HOUSE—A
GLIMPSE AT POLISH NATIONALITY—RAPID CON-
VERSE AND SLOW TRAINS—SPECIAL CORRES-
PONDENTS EN ROUTE FOR SERBIA—WARSAW.

WARSAW, JULY 17TH,

5th Russian style, 1876.

AH, what a burning, scorching sun!

"Alexandrovna," shouted the guard, and then we one and all glanced curiously out of the carriage windows, and realised the fact that we had at last—in very deed, if I may be permitted so to speak—arrived at our starting-point. We had reached the western frontier town of Russia—had achieved, there-

fore, feat number one; a feat, however, only to be immediately supplemented by another, calling for an infinite share of patience, and likewise inevitable of accomplishment—the stern examination of our baggage. Surely if feat number one had been the means of causing us satisfaction, the very prospect of the last-named had done precisely the reverse, as regarded some members of our party at any rate. Herein I speak personally. Having unluckily lost my keys *en route*, I had simply been compelled at various preceding stages to take refuge in stating the melancholy fact, and such statement had been as simply accredited; but at this identical spot, as a sort of penalty it may be presumed for my temerity in having set foot for the first time on Russian soil, I must e'en “bide the bent” of my small slice of misfortune. In we trudged, in the greatest haste imaginable, helter-skelter, however wearily, one after the other, something after the fashion of a flock of sheep urged on at the point of the bayonet, into the monster custom-house. It would be *bordering on cruelty* to torture you with the

Russian appellation. Not even a shabby, well-worn, unobtrusive little handbag had we been permitted to leave behind, lest it might possibly contain contraband goods. We simply lodged each and all of our worldly chattels upon the broad counter before us, as if we literally loathed the possession thereof, and yielded them, a humble tribute, at the feet of His Imperial Majesty Alexander II.

Marvellous blunder !

Our passports also—we duly handed them over, and then awaited the result. Would the *visé*, duly appended to my own by the Russian Consul in London, vouch amply for my general respectability ? Would also statement as regarded bunch of keys aforesaid prove equally availing ? “No.” This to the last-named query. Decidedly not. Russian power, as also superiority, was strictly vindicated, and the innocent baggage opened, thanks to the intervention of a long black-skirted Muscovite in the shape of a blacksmith. The scene meanwhile was Russian to the backbone, as regarded not only the dress of all those present, but in at least fifty

different characteristics. The hall was crowded with uniformed officers and *employés*, each wearing beards and heavy moustachios, who one and all went on chattering at the very top of their voices—for the greater part, of course, in pure Russ—and, as it seemed, all at once. No pause; no cessation whatever.

One of my companions, a master of the Polish language as well as of Russ, remembered, as he afterwards told me, that though now in territory owning Russian sway, we were yet, so to speak, on Polish ground, and adapted his language accordingly. The self-suggestion was, however, evidently ill-timed. Although comprehended, the mode of intercourse adopted was certainly not deemed an admissible accomplishment. Russ must here not only be in the ascendant, but supreme. At the *buffet*, however, matters took a somewhat different turn. Polish in this quarter seemed equally as acceptable as Russ, if not more so. The Polish sense of nationality, as we soon found out at other *buffets*, also at the hotels at which we stopped *en route*, is still marvellously strong, and oftentimes it

was with a sense of the utmost uncertainty as to what might, and what might not, in reality be regarded as his vulgar tongue, that we addressed this "waiter" and that. Some, if spoken to in Polish, looked forthwith supremely edified, others responded moodily; and this case as frequently held good in the matter of Russ. "Polish—heart and soul," exclaimed my companion, again and again, in delightful and harmonious English, "and Russian by the fate of war."

And now a deep bass voice heralded my name, as described upon passport, from the top to the bottom of the hall, only that so excessively Russian had it by this time become in its verbal expression, that I scarcely recognised it. But the document was again my own, and I was once more happy. I might now travel whithersoever I wished within those Imperial dominions, only not precisely on such terms as seemed most natural.

Politics, to begin with, I found, as we continued our journey, to be ordinarily avoided; or, if touched upon, approached within wide

limits. No one evidently dared to trench far into the minutiae of either this or that act of diplomacy. All fully comprehended, even if they did not duly respect the knowledge of the fact, that some political agent might, after all, be then and there present, taking, to say the least of it, mental notes, and that it was therefore infinitely safer to be ordinarily prudent.

Our party consisted of a curious medley ; all, in spite of the political inhibition just noted, talking loud and fast, French and German filling in the gaps at every odd moment, but not one word of English. Two clever and amusing special correspondents, as I soon found, going direct to Servia—Belgrade—and in the utmost haste to be there too, for time, as they remarked, was flying, and the train was not. Never, either, did men speak more truly. Never did trains on this earth, I venture to say, travel more slowly than do these Muscovitish ones. Jog, jog ; jerk, jerk ; and yet every one seems supremely satisfied.

The “specials” referred to were already

hard at work as regarded taking notes on their journey. MSS. came boldly to the front, and we began to be interested.

A Polish lady was my immediate companion—a highly cultivated one evidently—and a study to boot. She smoked incessantly, inserting her cigarettes in the daintiest of silver rings attached to a small silver tube. She sat with one arm akimbo—with, too, the most nonchalant air imaginable—puffing away the smoke from between her lips, and yet chatting unintermittingly. But great was my subsequent respect for her on finding that, true to the power ordinarily accorded to those of her nation, she was an adept, not only in her own tongue and in English, but also in Russ, French, German, and Italian, speaking each like a native, as we had hereafter full opportunity of testing.

Each individual in the carriage enlarged, to their hearts' content apparently, upon his or her own personal history, not only without the least shadow of reserve, but as if intensely gratified at the opportunity thus

afforded them of being discursive on said point.

I listened quietly. Had we had weeks in which to travel instead of only days, the conversation could not, I felt sure, possibly have flagged. But with the fall of evening we had now reached a point in our journey where I intended crying "quarter" and pausing for a while.

We had reached Warsaw. The City of the Jews it may indeed be termed, for the place simply swarms with them.

The dear old city, so richly fraught in the long past with story and romance—I may also say with tales of danger, intense suffering, and flight.

I was glad that I had determined on remaining there, if only, perhaps, for this—that I might recall as far as might be the scenes so long ago pourtrayed by a now dead hand, in the fortunes of "Thaddeus of Warsaw." Yes—I say this in spite of the state of the roads and pavements so called, both nothing but a long and painful series of coggly and sharp stones from beginning to end, wearing out

one's boots in ignominious fashion, and making one's feet ache distressfully to boot—no pun whatever intended. And yet Warsaw is in some respects an admittedly miniature Paris. If some of its streets are narrow it has also its magnificently wide ones—witness the Rue Marshalkovsky, through which carriages and “trams” perform their part every bit as energetically as in London itself. The houses therein are certainly of all shapes and sizes—odd and uneven, so to speak; the shops, of which it would seem to form the main centre, are diminutive and unpretending, and the street itself is straight instead of curved; but it is certainly the width of our Regent Street, and infinitely longer.

The streets are literally crowded with Jews and Jewesses from morning till night, and rarely could a more miserable set of men and women be seen, although most of the tribe in question, as I was told, are the wealthiest people in the place. But who would think it simply to look at them? Their cast of face would alone serve, as a matter of course, to

tell their descent; but there is, if possible, yet further indication of their birth. They dress uniformly in the shabbiest of black, greasy-looking coats reaching down to their heels, beneath which appear large, shambling, hugely-creased boots extending to their knees. They walk slouchingly, with the head bent down, as if wrapt in thought. And well they may, seeing that they are the money-lenders of the community, and therefore it need not be added that the future of many and many a Varsovien rests absolutely in their merciless hands, the rate of interest demanded by them being at times pitiless. And yet as kings they reign—dirty, greasy, and uncombed. All the married women wear wigs, it being a rule that after marriage their heads must be like that of the monk in the old story-book—if not “all forlorn,” at least “shaven and shorn.”

“Look! There goes another wigged woman,” exclaimed my guide. “Don’t you see?”

I turned round; but only for a moment. A far more beautiful and pleasing sight met

my eye. We had already entered the exquisite Jardin de Saxe, with avenues of trees leading in various directions, many of the latter meeting overhead and forming a protecting and at once, as it were, triumphant archway, and through which gaily-dressed citizens were promenading, for this was the fashionable hour. Truly, fashion holds its own everywhere, even in the once famous and ancient capital of patriotic, though unfortunate Poland.





CHAPTER II.

EN ROUTE FOR MOSCOW.

JULY 20th—8th, Russian style.

AND now with what a curious amount of growing interest we pursued our course day by day on Russian ground. The train jogged on slowly, in tiresome, aggravating fashion, past forest and plain, plain and forest, all level, and wholly undiversified—not even the vestige of aught approaching to a hilly country—and sometimes, to our utter amazement and at once small dismay, it would stop entirely, as if in sulky mood, at this or that point on the journey, as the case might be, where not even a shadow of a station was to be seen.

On one of the occasions just referred to, some member of our party ventured to question the guard thereupon. “You do not, surely, mean to tell me that the engine is

again in need of water ? ” he submitted, somewhat desperately. And then came that well-nigh perpetually recurring response, “ Da, da ”—“ Yes, yes ”—a broad grin extending itself meanwhile over the face of the official appealed to, as if he, too, saw the fun of all this unnecessary delay, and therefore quite appreciated the sally. Perhaps he would fain have insinuated, could he only have done so without trenching unduly on his dignity, that the consumption of wood in lieu of coal called also for the consumption of a larger amount of the watery element in question. We do not know, and therefore, of course, cannot say. We merely throw out the suggestion *en passant*.

Forest and plain, plain and forest, we have said. Yes ; and well-nigh nothing else, either, to be seen *en route*. If coal has never as yet been discovered in Russia—with, by the way, the exception of the due southern district—at any rate there is an ample amount of wood in every direction to meet the demand. The forests are simply endless in number, well-nigh boundless also in extent,

and hundred upon hundreds of piles of timber are grouped together, laid ready for use, at frequent recurring intervals along the line of road.

If, however, I have noted the excessive slowness in travelling in these regions, it is also fair that I should note the correspondingly excessive luxury combined therewith. Not ordinary first-class carriages as in England and most European countries, but literally regal ones. Nine crimson velvet armchairs, also crimson velvet sleeping accommodation in the carriage assigned us; with gilded ceilings, mirrors, and every corresponding luxury that even royalty itself might claim. And *apropos* of royalty, with which term is appended nobility. As only those belonging to this special rank ever even dream of travelling first-class—this as I was afterwards told—we had the carriage allotted to us entirely to ourselves, and felt proportionately edified; elevated also in the social scale, so to speak. But perhaps the main interest attaching to our present journey, *setting* aside the fact that we were now

nearing the Holy City of All the Russias, lay in the circumstance that we were traversing the exact route followed by Napoleon's army in 1812, on the never to be forgotten retreat from Moscow. Strange, possibly, it may seem that any railroad engineer should have thus been moved in spirit as it were, however unwittingly, to select the very ground so richly fraught with deep historical interest; but so it is.

After Brest—in Lithuania—came Beresa and Minsk, the latter rich with old association, and as regards present interest, boasting a station well worthy of note. Nearly all the other stations on the line are small and unpretending in point of style, but exquisitely attractive in that of beauty. Built entirely of wood as a matter of course, in all sorts of fantastic modes, with latticed windows and a superabundance of white muslin curtains adorning each, they at a moment's glance bespeak themselves Russian, even did not other details serve to remind one of the fact.

Oh, how these people gabble and chatter—scream, too, at times—as it seems to us, poor

benighted English folks that we probably are. At all points of the compass—by which is meant, in this particular instance, extent of platform erected at the various stations—the scene portrayed might fitly serve to represent Babel, only that perhaps the builders of the tower referred to lacked one of the, in the present case, prevailing characteristics—that of vehement gesticulation. Were they all in a state of the greatest ire and dudgeon one with another, I many and many a time wondered? Were some of them, in fact, to be explicit, just on the eve of perpetrating a duel—settling a point in dispute by means of single combat? It would really seem so. Only that I was laughed at, and that not specially mercifully either, for even hazarding the notion. No, on the contrary, they were all on the very best terms possible with each other. Nothing could have been more amicable.

A question had arisen amongst them—I refer to one particular occasion—with regard to an unmitigatedly trivial point as to whether some special house in Chicago—or group of houses

it might possibly have been for aught I know to the contrary—had at the date of the great fire there, some years ago, been built of wood or not. By a coincidence I was in a position, on being referred to, to speak confidently in the affirmative. The house in question was, I averred, built of wood undoubtedly—not stone. And then arose such a discussion as it behoves me to own I have seldom listened to in the whole course of my life. It was really astounding. One might readily have imagined that the ultimate fate of each member of the combative crew depended upon the due discussion of said, if inglorious, at any rate wooden topic. They battled it out vigorously, all speaking vociferously, and at once, sparing neither words, gesticulation, nor power of lung. The perspiration stood high upon their foreheads, ay, over the whole of their faces indeed. But what mattered it? Not one bit. The cause of “wooden house” in Chicago must be duly ventilated *coûte qui coûte*. What might not depend upon the issue thereof! They had each and all set their hearts upon carrying his or her own

particular point of view of the question in dispute, and would rather die than yield.

That wooden house in Chicago! Shall I ever forget it? An apt type indeed of the wonted mode of dissertation adopted in respect to every topic mooted, whether of moment or the reverse. But Borisoff, which we shortly reached, with the river Beresina creeping leisurely beneath. Yes; I even tried to hold my breath a moment—for there is a station here, and all was, as it surely ought to be, marvellously still, there not being a single passenger at this identical point either awaiting our arrival or taking his departure. I wished, if possible, fully to think out the chapter of the story now lying open before me—and yet by a sort of paradox, the reader will say, so long since sealed—and picture everything as it had in reality once been. I could yet see the bleeding, worn and weary Frenchmen, but brave still, even in the days of their defeat, step sternly and defiantly, if in straggling, yet in large masses, up to the river's brink. *The bridge* lies before them. Why hesitate?

Only that instinct tells them it is too narrow, all-powerless to bear the weight of such a sudden inroad. And they know it—and yet venture. And then when its centre has been reached by the foremost in the throng, and others are pressing madly onwards—for are not they all in close retreat—the span suddenly yields, and ruin again follows quickly in the train. Luckless expedition! A crash is heard, the timbers have given way, and the brave Frenchmen are already struggling in the waters beneath. And in this hour of renewed, though it might be looked-for horror, those behind, yet on the eve of pressing forward to meet death, are equal to the emergency. They see at a glance what is before them—certain death; or it may be, mark you, possible life. God only can tell. They plunge boldly into the stream, wade it by scores and hundreds; and the strength of some proves equal to the occasion—they reach the opposite bank; others sink to rise no more. What wonder, then, that we now stand beside the stream silently a moment!

The train has, as luck would at any rate

have it in this instance, remained here more than twenty minutes, and we have had full time meanwhile in which to find our way to the river's bank. Yes, we revered that episode in the world's ever-eventful history—the yet undaunted though defeated troops wading through the River Beresina.

And then again past Orscha, Smolensky, Vyasima, and Gshatsk, each with their green and gilded domes, however simple, and spires pointing hopefully to heaven; and still with each of these halting places was associated some tale connected with that one self-same story—that grand retreat, never to be blotted out from the world's history. Two days and nights spent thus, recalling well-nigh hourly such scenes, had scarcely served, as it may be taken for granted, to damp our ardour. We had, on the contrary, become enthusiastic in no ordinary degree. Poor worn travellers that we were, we were nevertheless not wholly mentally impervious to all that came before our minds' eye, and when within seven hours of reaching Moscow we passed slowly by the *field of Borodino*, where death and slaughter

had once been so busy, and where so many brave true hearts had lay a-dying, we involuntarily rose to our feet in the carriage, and peered wistfully, for very sympathy's sake, upon the spot pointed out.

But I am forgetting. Those days are now, it is true, associated only with a far past—the tale itself, as far at any rate as it would appear to the outer world, is a sealed book. But the fruits, I say, of such victory—also, I would add, of such defeat—still live in the hearts of those who were then unborn, and who still, with patriotic hearts, repeat it to their children's children.

And then the last hour of our long journey was ended. At Moshaiska, the last station on the journey, we had heard the bell ring thrice—the never-varying number of tinklings dealt in on this line ere the train will ever make up its mind to start again—and we were in Moscow at last—nearly 1,700 miles distant from our starting point, London.

Moscow, the ancient capital of All the Russias, and, as has been already said, reckoned the most holy city; where the

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Russians love so well to be buried, and where also superstition abounds in a pre-eminent degree. But of this, more hereafter.

Moscow, away, as it seemed to me, on first setting foot therein, from all the rest of the world; a veritably Eastern city—Eastern to the backbone; as widely different in each aspect from aught in the western hemisphere as, to use a vulgar metaphor, chalk is from cheese, and yet scarcely a hundred years old as regards even the commencement of civilisation. Perhaps this last fact is the most marvellous point of all, for a stride has been made therein from utter barbarism to—well, then, the present state of things, be that state what it may, and the next century will possibly witness a yet greater one. How disappointing, and at once of the earth earthy, to recognise the truth that it is only, after all, given unto a poor mortal to surmise such a stride *in futuro*, and that I, too, must become of the earth earthy long ere the realisation of such surmise can ever be an accomplished fact. But I am moralising. Is it to be wondered at, seeing that I am literally

in a new world? Instinctively I had realised the fact during the past four days' march, so to speak, that I was in very deed leaving the old world quite behind me, and dropping down into a new. Instinctively, also, I now felt the same, although human beings were clustered thickly all round, and porters and the drivers of *droshkys*—carriages answering in some fashion to English cabs, only somewhat lower, and almost invariably open—were in the most hospitable manner possible trying to make me feel that they welcomed, not only myself, but my baggage. Nearly four hundred miles distant from St. Petersburg, I mused—the latter at least a European city in character, however Russian in some respects. But this is Eastern, in every essential item even; such a city as one has only read of in fairy-books in childhood, and in the actual existence of which we then even scarcely believed.

Moscow, with its beauteous domes and gilded minarets, its nearly six hundred churches promising such marvels as it would at first sight seem for the holiness of those dwelling within their shadow, and with its

numerous monasteries and convents. Yes—and then I began to think hard. Was I not mistaken? Only that statistics supported me on every side. Moscow boasts the possession of well-nigh a hundred more churches than does even the Eternal City itself built upon seven hills—Rome. And yet, to compare the two cities one with the other—how vain a task!





RUSSIAN CHAPEL.

Vincent Brooks, lith.

arrived upon the scene, carefully guarded by soldiers and policemen, all appearing in their wonted costume as regards nether garments—white trousers ; but I had the good fortune—if in such things the commodity in question consists—I am sometimes disposed to doubt it—to be allowed to pass onwards in a direct line, and could catch a glimpse at intervals, and this with no little amount of interest, at several members of the stately and regal party feasting within. Were they happier than the more humble gazers without, I marvelled ?

They were dining on what is termed the *bel étage*. Large preparations had evidently been made on the score of illuminations as the hours of darkness approached, and a large triumphant archway opposite the house in question glittered even more gaily under its weight of countless artificial coloured lamps.

The streets around, and for some miles distant, were nothing but one blaze of flag and brilliant colour. The handsome Sadova Street, though I cannot speak as regards its *entire* length, seeing that it extends for about

twenty miles ; the broad and also handsome thoroughfare, the Blacksmith's Bridge by name, thronged with wayfarers and vehicles — and how many others.

Close to the Governor-General's residence, and on the same side of the street, stands the English club-house, assuredly not one whit behindhand, as regards elegance, any of those occupying the large area in Waterloo Place, its balcony being, at the instant I passed it, crowded with officers and others in various uniforms.

But another group, not so bright in colour, and yet infinitely more attractive in reality, attracts the attention. The object of those forming it was indeed fraught with interest—their motto, as a rule, silence. Behold them, then—a group of Moscovites—ladies and gentlemen—who moved onwards amidst the crowd, everywhere received with respect. A large collecting-box, with slit in the centre thereof, was suspended from the neck of some of the ladies by means of a riband.

“Collecting for the Slavonians,” “For the sick and wounded.”

They passed slowly, and with solemn air, along the streets, pausing leisurely, and with petitioning glance, before each passer-by; and rarely did the mute petition fail to meet with some response. The men responded invariably, were it only to the extent of a five kopeck piece; the women, to be frank, were somewhat more chary in the distribution of their coin. I joined the group. Why not?

They entered well-nigh every shop precisely in the same fashion. If those selling therein were Russians the box was simply tendered, as before, in silence; if French or German, we heard an occasional "Whom are you prepared to help?" or words something to that effect. The famous Russian baker's, Philipovo's, was, as a matter of course, not exempted from a visit. Philipovo! Bravisimo! One word of him, by the way. Nowhere else is such a baker's to be seen, I venture to surmise.

I entered also. Well-nigh over the entire space which the building covers, breads of every fashion possible, shape and size, and *cakes* in like numbers and proportions, stand

piled thickly and closely side by side. All too, of different descriptions, mostly of the daintiest kind, and not two sorts apparently alike. The shapes vary, in fact, as do the patterns in a kaleidoscope, and are fantastic to the last degree. From this class we would, however, exempt the huge quarterns of black bread piled wide and high in one quarter specially reserved for them, and in the composition of which neither shape nor ornament seems to call for the least consideration.

Again I followed the group. And then, after a brief space, came Gurin's, the renowned restaurant.

On entering it I glanced about, and wondered what I should see—also hear—next. Ordinarily, as I am told, the “waiters,” whose number seems legion, are attired entirely in white, but this being a *fête* day they were dressed off in the most fantastic mode; white trousers, and shirts of the most glaring colours, bright blue, red, and yellow being the main features of their attire. Mirrors on all sides reflected the colours gaily, and a magnificent church organ, so to speak, placed

at the far end of the building, was played deliciously, whilst the guests, seated around a hundred small tables or more, ate and drank. And such luxurious eating, too—cooking more especially—as is only Russian—rich, and essentially epicurean.

“How very queer and delightful,” I exclaimed.

The soliciting group still moved slowly onwards, in and out amidst the tables, and purse after purse responded to the appeal. These Russians are generous-hearted to a prodigious degree in such matters; will give, and give unhesitatingly, even if they know that every kopeck of their money is already fully bespoken. The act of saying “No,” on the part of any of them to such an application, would be a difficulty supreme.

The greatest excitement prevails everywhere about the Servian conflict. Nurses are being sent off in large detachments, several doctors have also set off voluntarily for the seat of war, and funds for the sufferers are being collected in every quarter in large *amounts*. There prevails, in fact, quite a

furore in the affair. One lady, who sallied forth only yesterday, her man-servant walking in guardian-fashion behind her, gathered in only a short time, and merely whilst traversing three small streets, nearly two hundred and eighty roubles—considerably upwards of £30. Clerks in the different public offices are subscribing so much monthly towards the general fund, and at a large dinner party given last evening—at which I was present, nearly all the rest being Russians born and bred—the health of the Servians was drunk with overwhelming enthusiasm.

The newspapers—some of them at any rate—express great dissatisfaction with England for not siding with, and also sympathising—I heard it expressed thus—“with a like Christian and suffering” people, and this report and that is ever and anon widely promulgated—with what ultimate view remains to be seen. “Russia against all the other Powers,” as I heard an old noble exclaim yesterday. “Russia against them all!” he pursued grandiloquently, and with an air of imaginary triumph; adding “And should this

indeed come to pass, we shall win, as we have ever done." Neither can one exactly wonder at this spirit being so dominant amongst them, on a closer acquaintance with both their country, themselves, and their history. They quickly and readily recognise the fact that their empire extends over well-nigh one-half of Europe, almost one-third of Asia, and even trenches upon American soil—a territory, thus regarded, more extensive even than was Alexander's, or the old Roman Empire. They note, with exultation and due patriotic pride, the fact that every man in the entire nation is a soldier at heart and ready to be called into active service, if need be, upon the shortest possible notice. They also note that all, as a rule, are strong and sinewy—thanks, too, to early and present training, sturdy, and hard of endurance—and herein they discover enormous source for satisfaction. They know, also, that their population is increasing in the most rapid fashion; that on territories boasting once only hundreds there are now thousands. And so in proportion, especially *in these regions* wherein Moscow lies, and its

surroundings, properly designated Great Russia. And then, in the matter of history. Their ready wit tells them only too promptly to look back into the past and note all that has been enacted therein. They remember that there was a time when the Empire consisted of only Great and Little Russia; that White Russia, terminating at Smolensky, where Napoleon's march, in 1812, was first resisted, did not then exist even in name; that its only coast was that bordering on the White Sea—its only port Archangel. They recall the time when they wrestled boldly with the Tartars, and conquered; mulcted Sweden of Finland, and Turkey of Bessarabia. And then, to follow up the story, the remaining history of the year already alluded to, still as fresh in their memory as it was the very day on which it was all enacted, they see Poland thrice partitioned off, so to speak, and then wholly subjugated, amidst the weeping and wailing of an entire nation.

And yet further triumph. They have but to once cast their eyes upon the gigantic cannon wrested desperately and hotly from

the French, and lodged for safety, also as trophies, within the walls of their glorious Kremlin. But I will not trust myself to-day to speak even one word further in respect to this mighty crowning point in this truly Asiatic city—more Asiatic, far, than European, in every aspect; this not merely from its curious formation and constitution, being an admixture of at once the most stately palaces and elaborate edifices in every direction, as also, nearly as frequently, little more than huts, thickly thatched.

Of the Kremlin itself, hereafter.

The houses in nearly all directions are as irregular in formation as are many of the streets. There seems, in fact, no special rule for guidance in the matter of either symmetry of building or combination of dwellings in this street and that. One is painted white, another blue, green, or yellow, as the case may be; such rule prevailing largely. One projects; another stands far back from the road. Many residences of a high class are built over shops.

One main attraction, however, must not

be omitted. The city abounds with gardens, parks, and ponds; boulevards, although on a somewhat less extensive scale than those in Paris and many other continental cities, lend every attraction to the scene; and in the special *quartier*—the fourth—the city being thus divided,—built rather in circles—in which I have for some days past taken up my abode, it might be fairly possible to imagine oneself settled down quite in the country. We look out from the balcony of my present resting-place upon nothing but thickly-clad woods, although knowing well that we are nevertheless in the very midst of human life and no ordinary excitement. Neither could we forget the fact, even if we would.

The band is even now playing merrily at the Zoological Gardens close at hand, and the bells of a massive and imposing-looking Greek church, hidden away just behind the trees—with, however, memory tells me, several green painted domes—are clashing most unpleasantly. Never did I hear such wonderful bell-ringing—bell-clanging in reality. Neither melody therein nor har-

mony, much less chiming. It would simply seem as if each of the ringers would fain see who could "pull the rope" the fastest, and also the most out of time. Clang, clang, slowly—at funeral pace—for, say, five minutes; then a repetition of the same at an infinitely greater speed, as if time was passing, and there was therefore none to be lost.

Then pause number two, succeeded now by such a clamour and galloping of bells as I should imagine was never heard out of Russia. And then quite suddenly the noise ends.

But the streets, to return to them, seeing that they are curiously tell-tale ones as regards national character; also to their inhabitants, human and otherwise. Droshkies, of which we have already spoken, ply unremittingly by thousands, and are employed by every one. No one ever seems to think of going on foot, if he can help it, even reasonable distances. "Eezvostchik!"—in plain English, hackney-coachman—exclaims the wayfarer, in a loud voice, invariably naming the price which he means to

give, as also his destination, all in one breath. This, as the owner of one of the vehicles aforesaid, responds to his summons; eēzvostchik in question being attired in the universal driver's costume—a long blue, shabby coat, very loose and full, with baggy sleeves, and gathered in at the back, with a prodigious white and pink sash tied round the waist, witness at any rate his summer costume.

The average droshky-driver boasts frequently the possession of red hair, whiskers and beard to match, and is of small stature; also exquisitely shabby-looking. The pencil of a Tenniel could alone do him ample justice, or indeed most of the curious street characters here. They are, one and all, of a type to be found nowhere else in Europe. But of our particular friend on the present occasion, who has evidently been waiting ruefully at his post, seeing that he is, as we have said, only one amongst thousands—he drives up with the air of a man determined upon doing business, and with the greatest promptitude, absence, too, of aught approaching in the least to *mauvaise honte*, demands

double the fare originally named. Should you have named twenty-five kopecks, he at once names fifty, and so on. You merely shake your head, give stolid utterance to the inevitable "nyaitt"—in plain English, no—so largely employed in this everlasting bargaining, and walk on without even looking at him. This as if you had already forgotten his very existence, and would rather walk to the land's end than employ him. He drives away resolutely, but is watching you keenly all the time, and what is more you instinctively know it. You have ere this hailed another, all the while walking on decisively, and meanwhile hearing the wheels of droshky number one, slowly, but persistently, following, the eezvostchik in question having retraced his track.

"Forty-five," shouts number one, seeing that competition is close at hand.

"Forty," shouts driver number two.

And yet you pursue your own way, as if communing mentally with some chum miles and miles away. You start—again ejaculate "*Nyaitt*. Twenty-five."

“Thirty-five,” exclaims number one.

“Thirty,” exclaims number two, now very red in the face.

Your own will yet serves you, however. You see clearly enough that the day, as usual, will be your own. You have only been compelled to walk nearly the entire length of the street as the penalty of your resolution. Wait then, patiently, and victory will soon be yours.

Again both drive away, each intending to return, and then when you are anything but blessing either of them in your heart, and have hailed number three, who now comes rushing forward, number one trots up quite cheerfully to your side, and “Please” is in such a case equivalent to twenty-five “ka-paiks,” as the successful candidate words it, and nothing else. And this bargaining in the streets, as also everywhere, is the inevitable order of the day from morning till night —*sans exception*; also at most of the shops, though not, as I have been told, in the very best. But, to speak truly, I have so far been in a variety of them, and find rare ex-

ceptions. "Beating down" is the universal rule in every direction, no matter what the purpose for which the purchases be made. I passed a *bouquetier's*. Several were bargaining within, and amongst the rest a young wife was purchasing flowers with which to adorn her husband's grave. She was exceeding *triste*—the salesman correspondingly stolid. The bargain had, however, to be struck in the usual fashion. In no instance, I am told, are matters contested more sharply and narrowly than in the matter of funerals. You systematically run the risk of being fleeced on such occasions to a terrible extent, but as systematically the attempt must be frustrated.

But *revenons à nos moutons*—the streets of Moscow. Trams, well filled and gliding along pleasantly, bespeak the march of civilization, and a marvellous absence of pavement at times, as also superabundance of "cobbly" stones, somewhat the reverse. The noise is as a matter of course prodigious, and employment for vehicles of every description in like *proportion*. The prices are ridiculously low

—in the matter of droshkies there is no fixed tariff—and therefore, as every one with the least amount of common sense observes, it is infinitely cheaper to ride than walk. *Gamins* abound—also plenty of beggars; also abundance of Sisters of Mercy, clad in black, though shabbily, from top to toe; a superabundance of peasants, the women clad in the most fantastic costumes—and also a multiplicity of priests. Again we want a Tenniel. Large round hats, flowing curly hair, parted in the middle of the forehead and reaching below the shoulders, with lilac or brown robes, reaching down to their feet and fastened at the waist by a cord, complete the dress of the latter. Another item respecting them, neither specially flattering to their particular class—the *white* priesthood, or those not associated with any monastery, and therefore incapable of preferment in the Greek Church—not flattering either to the boasted wisdom or professed advancement of the Russians in general. That it is deemed exquisitely unlucky to meet one of them in the streets, such event portending misfortune of

some kind, and that the only way of averting the threatened catastrophe is to adopt the elegant mode of spitting three times the instant they have passed. And what is more, the priests themselves, though fully cognisant of the existence of such a prejudice, are not in the least offended thereat. A noble, with whom I was yesterday traversing one of the best streets, acted accordingly. I laughed, but superstition rides hard and apace here in a thousand different ways. Never have I seen it carried to such perfection, coupled with such an amount of at once supreme ignorance and cringing credulity. But these last two attributes mainly as regards the peasant class—only fifteen years ago, the most abject and most obedient of slaves.





CHAPTER IV.

THE BLESSING OF THE HOME—A DESPATCH FROM THE KREMLIN.

MOSCOW, AUGUST 9TH—

28th July, Russian style, 1876.

IN no city in the whole world, I venture to say—civilised or the reverse—are the rites and ceremonies of a national church more religiously and carefully abided by, not only as regards the priests themselves, but by the lower classes in general—peasants to wit. I am impressed more strongly than ever with this fact as each day passes over my head. Morality—it is impossible making a feint even of concealing the circumstance—would seem in these regions at any rate to have small absolute connection with religion—religion with morality. The two things spoken of work on apart in parallel lines. But of the one, more I hope in the future; of the other,

of the orthodox religion—the due carrying out of the prescribed rites—superstitions we would in many cases call them—there is daily and hourly proof.

I was present yesterday at a scene, eminently domestic in aspect, though pre-eminently religious in character, which, though it interested me not a little, spoke largely for the huge superstition and correspondingly huge self-abnegation of the multitude. Having been specially invited, I gladly availed myself of the opportunity offered.

The ceremony in question—that of Blessing the Home—is, I find, one of frequent recurrence in these regions. Ordinarily, a house immediately after being built and first tenanted, undergoes the rite alluded to, the blessing then and there given serving amply for the future occupants, if handed down from father to son; not of course if re-tenanted by strangers. In the present instance, however, the house in point had simply undergone renovation—been re-papered and painted *throughout*; but the occupant, perhaps spe-

cially careful on such points, again required the ceremony to be enacted.

True to the hour of invitation, therefore—three o'clock p.m.—I mounted a long flight of steps leading out of one of the principal streets, and entered the dwelling. The master of the house—"flat" rather—for admittance to which invitations had been issued, came forward to receive his guests with the stately mien of one richly endowed with worldly goods. And so he was in reality. Originally a serving-man, ultimately footman, as I was told, in a large slave-holder's establishment—having of course within the past fifteen years obtained his freedom—the present host had, by degrees, and solely by his own cleverness and aptitude for business, risen considerably and surprisingly in the social scale. Now a rich man, handsomely dressed, and with plenty of gold chain visible, also seals of like nature, and various other appendages, he walked the floors of his suite of rooms with all the consciousness of a self-made man, rubbing his hands meanwhile complacently, and discoursing loudly and excitedly when plunging

into conversation. And education, as regards the study of letters—by which I allude literally to the primary elements—has had little or nothing to do with his advancement in life. In spite of such lack, however, he yet manages to enact his extensive business affairs in wise and prudent fashion. Abundance of plate, duly credentialed as the “veritable,” adorned his house, and as we entered the principal apartment—that in which the chief part of the ceremony was to be enacted—we stood face to face with a massive silver bowl, font-fashion, filled with water, soon to be made holy; also incense on silver dish, and salt.

At the further corner of the suite of reception-rooms, carefully and religiously nooked high up in a corner of the wall, was the holy picture or image, before which hangs a small oil lamp. The home of every one in Russia, rich as well as poor, is never without this sacred emblem, and ordinarily, although not always, a large upright glass-case—bookcase fashion—is also to be seen, filled with holy pictures, each framed in gilt, and containing

relics and church souvenirs—large morsels of bread which have been blessed by the priest and brought away from the church, being therefore curiously potent for good—small “biscuit loave” with a minute fraction of the same religiously cut out by the priest—and flowers, generally artificial.

We waited patiently, many having assembled; waited at least an hour and a half the arrival of the two expected priests. Why did they not put in an appearance true to the time named? Why so unpunctual? Many were the jokes indulged in at their expense—many the surmises dealt in; and, to be explicit, small amount of personal respect seemed to be entertained towards the class in general of which the two alluded to constituted part. Several opined openly that the two ecclesiastics were probably then and there in a state of intoxication, that they were possibly at that moment enjoying themselves to their hearts’ content in some neighbouring *kabak*—public-house—and consequently were in no fit condition to perform the service.

We had, however, at last reason to know

that the expected priests had, at any rate in this instance, been grossly maligned. They had even at this identical moment arrived at the gate of the establishment and awaited admittance. Their conveyance reminded me more of what an old family coach in ancient times must have been than aught else—marvellously bulky, and enormously capacious. We had already clustered closely around the latticed windows, for, previous to their arrival, the shouts of welcome which had attended the vehicle and its occupants as it rumbled along the street, had served to apprise us of its advent. The door—huge in dimensions—of the vehicle aforesaid was now thrown open, and when we looked for priests we saw them not; only an immense lumbering, apparently, picture, elaborately framed, eight or nine feet square, I should say, in dimensions, hauled out by men standing by for the purpose, and solemnly carried by them, the priests following.

And then the excitement—the *furore* amidst the assembled crowd, for the courtyard had yet to be traversed, and marvels

might in the meanwhile be enacted, seeing that the picture in question was indeed the holiest, the most prized in Moscow—that of its at once protectress and patroness, the Madonna. Regarded as utterly sacred, it has its perpetual home in an exquisitely small but beautiful chapel situated immediately outside one of the main gateways leading to the glorious Kremlin; and in this chapel service is ever being performed by chanting priests, the doors of the same being never closed. Candles are ever kept burning before the sacred so-called “image,” rows of nuns stand at the entrance with outstretched hands and mute voices soliciting alms, and the many and incessant wayfarers about either to enter or who have just quitted the gate—considered the chief entrance to the monstrous citadel within—never pass by without taking part for at least several instants, crossing themselves meanwhile repeatedly in the chanted service.

The presence of the picture serves, it is said, to effect the most marvellous miracles; being reputed, as I have already said, the

most holy thing in Moscow. It is sent for by the undeniably faithful inhabitants on all occasions when either healing or blessing is required—whenever also, it should be added, there is money in sufficient amount wherewith to pay for its advent; for in this country, as is the case in how many others, the ceremonies and rites of religion are only to be obtained by those who can pay for them, in however small a degree. “Not an atom, in fact, of priestly assistance is ever to be procured without money down being required,” as I heard a young noble exclaim yesterday; and, as far as I can see, he certainly spoke truly.

Only the face, hands, and feet of the “image”—although not image in reality—are permitted to be visible, as, indeed, is the case with regard to most pictures exhibited in the Greek Church, the rest of the surface thereof being entirely covered with gilt and precious stones; and the whole effect, consequently, most peculiar. The universal endeavour therefore is to kiss either the face, *feet, or hands*, with the view of obtaining

cure or blessing, as the case may be. Is any one dying, a petition is at once sent off to the Kremlin priests that the holy picture may without delay be despatched to the abode indicated, and the monster-vehicle, in response, soon rumbles off from its head-quarters, conveying its precious burden. The number of stories that are told of recoveries effected entirely by its means surpasses belief.

But the picture—brought, by the way, somewhat more than three hundred years ago from the Greek Islands, and now deposited for aye, as it is fondly imagined, in its present resting-place—has by this time been duly lowered, and now slightly raised from the ground, is borne onwards; and then the scene enacted in the court-yard has to be told. Scores of people who have gathered there on the spur of the moment, set about expressing their reverence and adoration. They bend low, and cross themselves over and over, and over again, walking backwards, as if in royal presence; but the main aim of every one is, if possible, to “duck”—popularly termed in English phrase

—beneath the picture itself, clearing the ground below it. If this feat can only be accomplished, it may bring, who knows, how large a share of luck and blessing to the happy diver. They watch their opportunity—dive as occasion offers—are beneath the wave, so to speak, and then emerge triumphantly at the other side. And this at the imminent risk of having injured their brain-work for life. Women with infants in their arms stand by in large numbers—many of the small tribe just named, weak and wailing—awaiting the right moment, and then down go the heads of both, almost as a matter of necessity, to the ground. One trembles instinctively on behalf of the juvenile, only that the next instant the rubicon is passed, the boon has been conferred, and all is well. Scores of them “duck” in turn, and by this time the “image” has been carried upstairs, and is set down with a heavy bang against the wall in the principal room. It is of immense value. The diamonds clustered on its surface alone are worth many thousands of *pounds*—how many I am really afraid to say.

although this sum and that, most extravagant ones, were named. It is, however, literally a blaze of diamonds.

And now we all stood behind the priests, for the service had commenced in right earnest. Never have I beheld more utter reverence exhibited. With many it is nothing but one entire scene of crossing themselves from the very beginning to the end of the service—the men and women, not simultaneously, but at all sorts of intervals, bowing low, more than half way to the ground, and frequently, not only touching the ground with their foreheads, but maintaining the same attitude for some minutes together. How they manage thus to sustain this attitude I am somewhat puzzled to think. It must require considerable muscular power at any rate. The service was given expression to in a sort of wild chant, with occasional loud and monotonous reading, and was entirely in Slavonic—a sort of dialect much in association, I am told, with Russian, as Scotch is with English. It was a somewhat lengthy affair. Incense was duly dispersed in all

directions, and then the chief priest, facing us, presented his book, handsomely bound in silver, and with silver clasps, to be kissed by every one. As a matter of course it was duly pressed by the lips of even the merest infant present. Then came the holy water, just blessed, handed around in a tumbler. Every one drank some, anointing also their faces, more or less, therewith. One father, whose small son, yet in arms, looked as if he were indeed well-nigh at death's door, seized the opportunity offered with marked anxiety. I watched him narrowly. His own child-like faith, also evident solicitude, struck me forcibly. Surely if faith removes mountains, his must have been difficult of either confutation or annihilation. He not only bathed the eyes, nose, and cheeks of his little one; but, re-dipping his fingers in the tumbler, carefully bathed his head. And then the signal was given, and again a rush was made at the wonderful picture, all pressing forward and allowing their lips to remain as long as might be, pressed against the portion of it that remained uncovered by either diamonds

or gilt. My companion whispered to me that some time ago one of these precious jewels was, in some fashion—how it is not known—abstracted, and that, consequently, since then greater care than ever has been taken of it. But this adoration of pictures is an important feature in the service of the Russian Church, although images, as used in the Roman branch of the Church Catholic, are strictly forbidden. The procession now moved from room to room, the priest scattering incense everywhere; and then, at times over the very necks of the people, at others scarcely a foot from *terra firma*, the “image” of “the patroness of Moscow” was carried home again, to its chapel at the Tverskaiya Gate, amidst a *furore* of Muscovites assembled below. The priests gone, the ecclesiastical part of the ceremony was ended; and part number two—the feasting section—began. Most delicious miniature cakes, sweetmeats, and *bon bons* of every description and pattern stood upon a side table, with *voitky*, as a matter of course; and of these each member of the company partook, helping themselves

according to pleasure. The ceremony of inviting guests to partake is persistently ignored here, unless, indeed, at set dinners so-called, when some slight exception prevails, and many of the edibles are handed round, *à la Russe*, as we in England, aptly or inaptly, term it.

The provisions are ever supplied in ample measure. There is no stint whatever, and the motto in vogue would ever seem to be—help yourself. I have already fallen aptly into the fashion just named; this in happy accordance with the convenient old maxim—“When at Rome, do as the Romans do.” Every one drank the health of the now satisfied host, and congratulated him, and then with a vigorous amount of bowing—only the ordinary thing, however, here—we one and all quitted the scene.





CHAPTER V.

INTENSE EXCITEMENT IN RUSSIA—DEPARTURE OF VOLUNTEERS FOR SERVIA.

MOSCOW, AUGUST, 9TH—

28th July, Russian style, 1876.

THE excitement about the war increases at a startling and rapid pace. Collections in aid of the Servians are still being made in every direction, by ladies and gentlemen—in the parks, shops, in all the principal churches, restaurants, and, in fact, every favourite place of rendezvous. A begging party went the other day into one of the lowest, and cheapest of course, restaurants in the city. They looked around; only peasants were present, and they of the very poorest grade, partaking of their simple ordinary fare, or of some slight beverage—costing possibly the miserable three kopeck-piece wontedly given by them.

Each peasant, however, willingly gave his mite, the result of the giving of which must, alas, have been at the best only stern self-denial. The collecting group turned away. They could not find it in their hearts to prosecute their task amidst such at once generous-hearted but poverty-labelled creatures. But it is amongst such, after all—the peasant class *pûr et simple*—that the intense strength of the feeling at present rife would seem to have its stronghold. An anecdote now circulating in this city, associated with the late visit of Prince Humbert and the Princess Marguerite, bears ample evidence to the truth of my assertion. On the arrival of the Royal party, one of the members of a large gathering of peasants, standing near at hand, addressed a policeman—

“ The Royal party just expected—whose part do they take ? ”

The policeman just addressed looked down witheringly ; wondering, perhaps, at the audacity of the peasant in question.

The query was repeated with great per-

tinacity, and then the official demanded the reason for preferring it.

“Tell us quickly,” was the only answer.

The official admitted that Prince Humbert had sympathy with the Slavonians.

“It is well,” was the response, and then a burst of applause rang from the group. “Had it been otherwise we should simply not have accorded him welcome.” News is pouring in fast from every quarter. From Warsaw, I am told by those who have just been eye-witnesses to their departure, officers and soldiers, all volunteers, are setting off daily for the seat of conflict, the scenes enacted at the railway station between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and who shall say how many other relations in life, being heart-rending in the extreme.

But the news from St. Petersburg to-day, supplied also by an eye-witness, defies description. The Emperor has given the rank of officer to all the Servian students in that city who are upwards of sixteen years of age,

and nearly two hundred officers departed thence by train only yesterday, accompanied by a troop of soldiers, *en route* for the south. The scene is described as being something unparalleled. At the station designated "Nicolaieff" some thousands were assembled, the friends and relatives of those just setting off. The multitude present—mostly peasants—had all purchased, for the sum of three kopecks, bouquets from a huge mass of the same, dainty in the extreme, which had previously been brought there in cartloads for the purpose.

When the first bell tinkles for the departure of the train, the group stand by patiently waiting, all the patriotic volunteers having at the given signal taken their places. As the second sounds, the thousands of spectators give way, it may be to weariful sorrow, or it may be helpless despair. They recognise the fact that many of their dear ones are going in all probability to meet their fate, and the already forlorn wife shrinks in horror from the prospect; other ties, too—ties equally

dear—are in all human probability now on the eve of being snapped asunder.

Again the bell rings—for the third and last time—and the final adieux are hurriedly whispered, the last wave is given; and then the enthusiasm of the multitude finds free vent. As if simultaneously, the already referred to hundreds of bouquets are showered hopefully and in triumphant fashion in the faces of the departing warriors. Then another volley—and then another. The flowers fall fast and thickly into the various crowded carriages—even into the laps of those so soon, all hope, to come off conquerors. They even lodge lightly in the window frames, blocking out the light of day. They lie scattered thickly upon the top of the carriages themselves, and the *tableau* is perfected. Such enthusiasm! Where has it been surpassed? It is the voice of the people now that speaks—it was in past days that of the *noblesse*. Such a picture as that I have just essayed to describe is only to be witnessed once, perhaps, in the course of a lifetime. *Revenons*

à nos moutons—the assistance sent off in the shape of money, nurses, and doctors. No less than five millions of roubles have, I hear to-day, been gathered for the purpose in St. Petersburg alone ; and the wife of one of the leading men there, who has nobly undertaken to organise the charitable fund and also general proceedings in the matter of sending personal help, has in the same noble fashion, report again says, on hearing that discipline in the matter of tending the sick and wounded is sadly at a discount, offered her own services, if actually required, as controller and superintendent of the entire hospital staff. A second Miss Nightingale, truly ! I wish her all success in her sweet mission, if carried out.

The victories reported one day on this side of the contending parties, another on that, increase the general excitement. The news recently, of the thorough defeat of the Turks, is a source, of course, of incessant conversation and congratulation. I have just met an officer who has come direct from Tcher-

kask. He says that so hot is the spirit of enthusiasm there that a few days ago the eezvostchiks of the town—otherwise hackney-coachmen—having been specially applied to, as a distinct and separate body, came bravely forward *en masse* and subscribed a sum of money which was utterly unlooked-for and unprecedented. Not a single eezvostchik refused to contribute.





CHAPTER VI.

BENEATH MONASTIC WALLS—THE DÉVITCHY MONASTERY.

MOSCOW, AUGUST 12TH—

July 31st, Russian style, 1876.

It never rains but it pours—at any rate so runs the dear old English adage—and I fully believe in the truth of the remark. I seem literally, within the past few days, to have fallen into nothing else than the wake of religious ceremonies. Only that the pageant which I have to-day witnessed outsteps that spoken of in my last “notes” in magnificence and solemnity, as does the brilliancy of the moon that of the stars. There are assuredly degrees of glory—also ceremonials and ceremonials here as elsewhere.

Anent, therefore, this second ecclesiastical rite, from witnessing the celebration of which *I have* only just returned—and the remem-



ICE BREAKER.

Vincent. Brooks, lith.

brance of which, I verily believe, will never be effaced as long as life lasts. If the expression dealt in seems somewhat strong, I regret it, but, nevertheless, do not retract the words. I only write as I feel.

The *fête* in which I have to-day taken part, must have surely served to kindle enthusiasm even in the most cold-hearted and indifferent of Englishmen. Having been told that this was the *fête*-day of the patroness-saint of an important monastery—designated Dévitchy, or the Virgins’—some miles distant from the city, I resolved to be present, and joined a party of Russians for the purpose.

We started early, and after a long drive, reached the locality named about nine o’clock a.m. Onwards we had driven past churches and domes without number; past hundreds and hundreds of peasants, all clad in their gayest and most fantastic holiday attire, and patrolling the streets *fête*-fashion; then over an extensive green plain; and now the huge “monastery” itself, with its thick, prison-like and apparently white-washed walls, stood before us. The inharmonious bells

were clanging, of course, at a wonderful pace, and the entrance to the main gateway was lined for a considerable distance with soldiers and policemen. Immediately beneath this gateway, and under the entire line of archway stretching beyond it, stood nuns, old and young, good-looking and unattractive in appearance, with tin plates in their outstretched hands, ready to receive alms. The house of refuge in question had been described to me as I have herein worded it, a *monastère*. I have followed suit, adopting the identical phrase, but it is in reality a convent. All the holy houses of seclusion, either for men or women—it matters not which—are, I find, described in the one word, “*Monastère*.” A further and more detailed explanation is required if one would know what is actually meant.

The nuns of this particular order wear simple black dresses, but the head-gear is, on the contrary, prodigious—ponderous, I would protest, in the extreme. A huge black velvet hat or cap, with fur, reaching low over the forehead, and mounting sugar-loaf fashion,

at a distance of about a foot and a half from the brow, to a point at the top. The most disguising gear possible, and at once, surely, the hottest. The day was a broiling one, and we unquestionably felt sorry for the "sisters," who, of course, had no option at all in the matter. The monastic pile and all its surroundings were to-day to be blessed once more by the Metropolitan of Moscow. Of the three Metropolitans which Russia possesses, the Moscow patriarch ranks first, being Metropolitan of all Russia—next in rank, of course, to the Emperor himself, who is, as every one knows, head of this large portion of the Eastern Church. Next comes the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, and then that of Kiev, which city disputes with Novgorod Veliki the palm of antiquity. It also has been called the Holy City of the Russians—the "Jerusalem of the North"—and possesses the earliest Christian Church in Russia.

But to return to our *monastère*. Immediately *en face*, at the opposite end of the extensive court-yard or space enclosed by

sombre quadrangular cloisters, stood the gilded and many-domed church, and it was a picture in itself to behold the many hundreds of peasants as they thronged in, men and women, the former in blouses, the latter in costumes of every conceivable colour, always, however, of the very brightest, with handkerchiefs of a like character—of texture varying in degree according to the length of purse of the possessor, but many of them attractive and picturesque in the extreme—bowing and crossing themselves before the edifice referred to. It is their habit from childhood thus to recognise the presence of sacred places.

They stooped and thus signed themselves many times before a picture of the Madonna, placed in a recess. Not even the smallest child omitted the duty in question. And it is ever so, even in the streets. No one ever passes any of the nearly six hundred churches of which Moscow boasts without paying them reverence. Thus, as they are continually bursting upon the view, the reader may readily picture the scene. The driver of the *droshky* removes his hat, and piously crosses

himself three times. Your cook, who has just been out on a marketing expedition, and congratulates herself upon the fact that she has pocketed, she herself knows best how many kopecks on her own behalf—it may be even roubles—by the transaction in question, pauses solemnly, her basket meanwhile witnessing reprovingly on her arm, and sanctimoniously performs her part; bows low—and yet still lower—crossing herself repeatedly, in true orthodox fashion. The veteran soldier and sailor—the mere cadet even—the subdued looking nun, and priest, with his ordinarily curly hair parted in the middle and reaching down below his shoulders—the peasant, *gamin*, and the self-congratulatory noble, are at least alike in this—all follow suit. The unity of the proceeding serves to impress one forcibly.

The multitude had ere this thronged into the monastic church; the women—those at any rate possessing such articles of attire—having previously, according to custom, removed the glove enveloping their right hand. All stood now in rows facing the altar; the

latter carefully screened from view, however, by what would I imagine in England be termed a sort of rood-screen—one entire mass of pictures “let” into screen in question, and in the very centre of which stand massive golden doors, called “royal.” The crowd still stood, no seats being allowed in this large Russian portion of the Greek Church—unless, indeed, in case of illness, when a bench placed on one side of the church is occasionally used.

We had a nearly five hours’ service before us. Physical strength, however, they say, often goes pretty much in accordance with mental will. Why not, therefore, achieve that which lies within the capacity of others?

And now I simply stood there like one in a dream. Yes; it had been well worth my while to start off from dear old England, if only for this—to witness this wonderfully beautiful and Eastern pageant. No words could ever possibly describe the scene—the amount of pathos, the rapturous excitement, the devotion and at once extraordinary evolutions performed by nearly every one present.

Again I wondered whether I was in reality awake. I hoped so, for the picture was already too elaborate and fantastic to be conjured up a second time only at will. Again—if this were reality, what constituted ideality?

There is no instrumental music in the Greek Church; but the vocal music indulged in is winning in the extreme—fascinating beyond description. Singing men and boys were stationed at one side of the entrance to, as it is termed, the grand altar—not, however, attired in white surplices, but in their ordinary dress—and nuns on the other. I could at times only contrast the chanting with a wild gipsy dirge, so curiously and in such exaggerated fashion did the cadences rise and fall during the course of the service. To the nuns themselves seemed entrusted the entire care of the edifice, as regarded its adornment and all concerned. Some were busily engaged in laying down a rich Turkey carpet in readiness for the procession so soon to pass over it. Others lighted candles in all directions, extinguished them as occasion

required, relighted them without giving the smallest notice—without also, apparently, the smallest reason for so doing—and so on throughout the course of the day. Three or four literally spent great part of the time in mounting a small ladder reposing against a *corona lucis*, lighting and extinguishing the large tapers encircling it, as duty required. And then the procession had moved up through the long aisle, and entered the body of the church. The scene, I repeat, was simply one of Eastern magnificence—Oriental pomp. In no other city in Europe could aught of the kind ever have been witnessed. The voices rolling melodiously through the air, the lighted candles in many directions, the procession of priests and monks, some of them weird and sallow-looking, others exquisitely blowsy and cheery in aspect, but all heavily bearded and moustached, with the wonted long curly locks of hair, which they occasionally arranged, at odd intervals, with pocket-combs, which they evidently carried with them; the devoted people, the elaborate dresses of the ecclesiastics, but more speci-

ally of the Archimandrites—three, I believe, in number—and last, though not least, of the aged Metropolitan himself—Innocent by name—the entire picture impressed me forcibly.

On this important *fête* all the holy pictures carefully reserved in the “monastery” are brought out to view, carried by the priests as they move slowly along, and those who are fortunate enough in being able to kiss any of them deem themselves inexpressibly happy. The treasures of the “*monastère*” indeed! What eager, wistful eyes follow the pageant as it passes along. I was fortunate enough in having a place assigned me tolerably close to the Metropolitan when he mounted the sort of *daïs*, placed *pro tem* immediately in front of the altar, and gave the benediction, delivered, as in duty bound, in true Episcopal fashion, the thumb and third finger of his right hand being at the instant in juxtaposition. He possesses a quiet, thoughtful face, not nearly so ascetic in aspect as I had anticipated, and being the victim of cataract, has entirely lost the use of one eye. His mien, as also the amount of personal support accorded

him by the attendant priests, gave me the impression that he was a very aged man, but such, it appears, is not the case. It is simply as a matter of inevitable ceremony, after all, that he is thus, as it were, supported on either side. On arriving at the centre of the church itself, another long ceremony had to be enacted. The robes previously worn by the Metropolitan, elaborate in the extreme, had now to be discarded. He was placed upon a high chair, and sat there solemnly, whilst the priests brought in dresses yet more elaborate, stoles to match, etc. It was impossible to help wondering whether all this rearranging and redecking business did not in reality bore the old ecclesiastic.

The robes now brought him were of the most extravagant value, and he was duly attired therein, previously kissing every garment presented to him, as one or other of the attendant priests duly tendered it to his lips. His high hat—mitre rather, I presume—underwent the same ceremony. Then his hands were kissed, his shoulders, and that *portion* of the scene was, fortunately for himself,

I should deem it, completed. When ended, all the sacred pictures were carried amidst the assembled crowd, and through, I imagine, the entire precincts of the monastery and grounds attached thereto; but this I only surmise, not having followed the procession after it actually left the church, and therefore only guessing what became of it meanwhile.

At the finale I still stood there in blank amazement at myself, being scarcely tired. The Metropolitan descended from his *daïs*, and then a violent rush was made to kiss his hands. In the course of his retrocession through the church, down the steps leading thence, and across the court-yard conducting to the refectory, many thousands must have shared the privilege. It occupied him, in fact, about one hour and a half to traverse territory that would otherwise scarcely have claimed three minutes' space. The Archimandrites and other attendant priests, distributed holy water as they passed along; sprinkled it far and wide upon the assembled multitude. My companions—pure Russians

in tastes, likings, and habits, "went in" enthusiastically for every privilege and boon conferred. To tell the truth, I did the same, only somewhat less enthusiastically, and had the honour of kissing the Metropolitan's hand. And behind came a cluster of nuns, marching closely, rolling up the Turkey carpet as the sacred feet of the old patriarch trod onwards. The feet of the crowd, it was self-evident, were not to desecrate it by their tread.

Having reached the refectory, he mounted the balcony leading therefrom, and gave another episcopal blessing. Having accomplished his task, dinner was served within the walls, and we, poor lookers-on, were not admitted further within the precincts. I was, however, amply satisfied that the scene should end as it did. It had been grandeur itself, and eating and drinking, however essential adjuncts, seemed wonderfully trivial ones when compared with all that had gone before. Two hours later, the episcopal carriage, with its eight splendid black horses brilliantly *harnessed* with silver, dashed boldly into the

court-yard, and conveyed away, in due worldly style and pomp, the Metropolitan of all Russia.

But the day's work was not nearly over. The fun was now about to begin. All around the white monastic walls, with aspect so impenetrable that we could only compare them with those of some ancient and forbidding-looking prison fraught with historical and grave reminiscences, a scene pregnant with naught but amusement and frolic was now in hand. Merriment and pleasure had indeed usurped the day—solemnity and pomp had vanished, as chaff before the wind.

There's a time for everything in this world, said one of our wisest men ; and so indeed it proved in this instance. Hundreds of tents were erected in every knoll and available space, and within the aforesaid, *chipeat*—otherwise tea—was served to all who chose to pay for it. The adoption of the "Samavar"—a sort of urn, with coke fire in centre—is a veritable epidemic in these regions. No house is without one, from the highest to the lowest in the land.

Talk of the taste for tea-drinking that prevails in England! Why, it is simply as nothing when compared with the Russian facility for consuming this beverage. Go where you will it is offered for delectation. And such tea. Purer and better, far, than any that is ever partaken of in England. The fact of its coming overland is assigned as the cause. But the price—ordinarily speaking, nearly twice as much as our own, although, be it added, a much less quantity is requisite, so that in the end perhaps matters rest pretty much *in statu quo*. I tasted tea last evening that had cost exactly twenty shillings a pound, and, to be explicit, was not specially impressed with its superlative worth. The flavour, however, was piquant in the extreme. Two hundred *samavars* at least, I was told, were on the ground in question. And then came the surroundings. A regular English fair, with various Oriental *addenda*. Swings, merry-go-rounds, dancing-booths, exhibitions of the usual description, smiling organ-grinders with dancing monkeys, and bands of music.

And the other surroundings—beggars and impostors, fiddlers and “Punch and Judy,” the sober and the woefully intoxicated, the sellers of wares, sweetmeats and toys, and the fascinated, believing purchasers of each in turn. But the evening had waned, and we had with the setting sun bid adieu to those monastic walls.





CHAPTER VII.

TCHERNAYEFF—AND GLOOM—A SOLEMN MASS—
FURTHER DEPARTURE OF VOLUNTEERS—THE
NOTES OF THE RUSSIAN HYMN—BENEATH THE
PORTALS OF THE OUSPENSKY SABOR—A SKY-
BLUE “ARAB”—AND A RUSSIAN RACE-
COURSE.

MOSCOW, AUGUST 19TH—
7th, Russian style, 1876.

THE picture of General Tchernayeff takes its place now in it would be impossible to say how many households. He is, emphatically speaking, the hero of the day, his praise being in every one's mouth—high and low, rich and poor. A good-looking man decidedly, about forty-five years of age. A soldier to the backbone, he fought bravely in Asia, being at the head of the troops in the well remembered Turkestan business, in which contest he also came off as conquerer with only a handful of two thousand men at his disposal.



TRAVELLING CARRIAGE.

Vincent Brooks, lith.

Subsequently to this—how long after it is not in my power to say—another officer high in rank was sent out from head-quarters to review the troops in question. General Tchernayeff expressed himself willing and pleased that the review should take place, only submitting that he should still retain his present position in said quarters as head of the troops then and there assembled, it having ever been their wont to regard him as such, and declining to lose personal *prestige* by permitting aught else. If report speaks truly, the request preferred was paid little heed to. On the day appointed, however, the General, true to his determination, came forward in the face of every one and saluted his troops, as usual, as their head and chief. The news spread. Interviews in respect thereto were fixed at head-quarters in more than one direction; but each failed signally as regarded accomplishment, thanks to this cause and that. The two highest in authority declined, as report says, to see him, and then a third interview was appointed. Tchernayeff arrived too late, though only by

five minutes ; but he had thereby lost his apparently last remaining chance.

He was now actually without money and all means of subsistence. *Que faire?*

In this, his last hour of extremity, the citizens of Moscow came boldly forward, voting him a sum of no less than 21,000 roubles. Again the news of the day reached headquarters. Again Tchernayeff was sent for ; and in reply to the demand why he had accepted the proffered aid, he could only respond that he was well-nigh penniless. A post of honour was instantly placed at his disposal. Subsequently, he became joint editor or proprietor—I am not in a position to say exactly which—of one of the leading newspapers. A literary man now, but only for a season. The present war breaks out, and Tchernayeff, of course previously giving up his commission as a Russian officer, bravely takes the lead on the field, identifying himself heart and soul with the Slavonians. So much for the gallant General. This is at least his story, as I have been told *it*.

His wife, a German by birth, is now in St. Petersburg with her five young children, and takes her part with the rest of the community in procuring funds for the suffering portion of earth's sons and daughters in the far south. May God avert the storm ere it extend further, and send oil upon the waters now so terribly troubled!

The gloom, consequent upon the impending storm, is falling heavily upon Moscow, as everywhere else in Russia. A solemn mass was said yesterday in one of the principal churches here on behalf of those officers and soldiers who have already fallen on the field of battle. The loss of one of Moscow's bravest citizens—amongst how many more—who had only a few days ago started off to join the troops, was specially named in connection with this public devotional act. Only thirty-eight years of age, he had volunteered his services, which were readily accepted, and last week he quitted Moscow with the sum of two thousand roubles in his pocket—the entire amount to be devoted to the cause of the sick and wounded. Within, alas, only

two days of his arrival, he met his fate—was mortally wounded, in company with an as gallant young fellow-officer, half his own age. The citizens feel the blow keenly.

A doctor who visited this house a month ago, clever, and at once eminently patriotic in heart, threw up on the spur of the moment his excellent private professional practice, and plunged into the *mêlée*, with the view of mitigating, as far as in him lay, the bitterness of the struggle. He, also, it has been reported, has succumbed to his fate—with what truth I know not.

But this is only a sample of the tales we hear frequently now, and on all sides.

The mass—an exceedingly solemn one—was supplemented by general almsgiving. Several ladies, each carrying a *cruche*—collecting box—the object with which they were presented being duly inscribed thereon—passed slowly and silently down each aisle, and an also silent, but, nevertheless, hearty and substantial response was accorded by every one present. None hesitated. The soft paper rouble slipped noiselessly—surely, however,

and ungrudgingly—into the red-sealed *cruche*. And then the sermon—but even now I pause ere penning the words. The officiating priest began his discourse, but only to break down. He spoke of him who had only so recently gone out from amidst their ranks, not only on glory bent, but in the interests of “dear humanity,” his purse amply replenished with money on behalf of the suffering, and richly endowed with valour to contend with foes—and then sobbed audibly. Who does not know that such sorrow is infectious, even if the hearts of those listening are not previously disposed to follow in the same wake? But in the present instance the hearts of all present had been from the very beginning in undeniably cordial union—the fact of their being all then and there assembled was alone herein amply significant. Heart-beat answered warmly to heart-beat, and the entire audience was affected in the same fashion. Men and women broke down—sobbed alike—and it was a considerable space ere the priest could sufficiently command himself to venture further with his task. The Russian papers

are crying out vehemently for a formal declaration of war. Whether this will be the case or not remains to be seen. All are in a state of the greatest anxiety.

Another act in the drama, pregnant with meaning, came off this evening at the terminus of the Moscow and Brest Railway. Another group of volunteers, consisting of officers, soldiers and priests, took their departure for the seat of war, amidst the weeping and heartfelt *adieux* of an enormous crowd. Never before have I been associated with such a scene—so strongly indicative of patriotism—never again should I desire to be so. The volunteering party carried with them, arranged tent-fashion, and for the nonce carefully packed away in boxes, two churches. Though the component parts thereof are now lying piecemeal, so to speak—limb from limb—a few days hence will probably see them put once more into shape, with the view of the rites of the Church being duly carried out therein. They have been urgently petitioned for by the priests already administering their ghostly aid at the seat of all the trouble,

as the full ceremonial of worship, they say, cannot be fully enacted without them.

The expressed need has been promptly supplied.

Another not unimportant item accompanied the party—the old but revered flag specially appertaining to this ancient city.

The route to the station was lined with vehicles containing those bent upon saying God-speed to these *brave hommes*. The station itself presented a dense mass of anxious, eager faces. It was with the utmost difficulty that we obtained entrance, and once within it I instantly and instinctively felt that one had at least no place there as a simple sightseer, that the ground was sacred to those who also formed part and parcel of the present demonstration at the shrine, as they deemed it, of self-abnegation and patriotism. Weeping men and weeping women; ay, and even little children. Hats off. And then the multitude paused solemnly for a brief space—joined in the service already begun, with eyes cast low upon the ground. The priests—those who had only accompanied

their companions so far—were praying earnestly and loudly as they yet stood upon the platform. They chanted the words in never to be forgotten fashion—that God might ever give the Russians victory, defend them ever from their enemies, and give them “days of peace.” They chanted solemnly for the safety of those now going out from amidst their ranks, and then the multitude took up the response, as if with one accord, and prayed the same, the voices reverberating wildly through the air. The peasants joined alike. No head remained uncovered—none unbent. “’Tis as they pray always in the mass,” whispered my companion, his voice well-nigh too much choked for utterance. And then again that howling, earnest prayer—and the response—only to be followed instantly by the enchanting notes of the Russian National Hymn, scarcely a voice in the whole assembly being mute—not an eye being dry. Again, and yet again, they sang it; and then the first bell had sounded. Again that earnest prayer to Heaven that God would send the Servians victory—and

the response, and hymn. The second bell. Again words of hope, encouragement—and those of sorrow; and with the third tinkle the heavy train slowly quitted the platform. Slowly—for such it appears had been the express orders given. The friends left behind marched on steadily by the side of each open carriage door, and thought of what might be—held on, so to speak, by the handles—and the general crowd swayed onwards also, cheering, sobbing, and huzzaying, amidst the notes of that, still chanted, thrilling hymn.

“Prashtchèytai”—“good-bye.” “*Au revoir*,” was the one simultaneous shout. If the first-named salutation was simply expressive of *adieu*, the second was at least suggestive and hopeful. *Au revoir* I also say, brave volunteers. A *cruche* suspended round the neck of a Russian lady, who had taken up her stand in the very centre of the throng, was perhaps aptly presented to view at such a moment. Who could refuse to give? Still more—who listen to those often vociferated shouts for victory and triumph—that undisguised condemnation also of all those nations

who have not yet seen fit to utter their voice in the matter—without growing thoughtful as to what may ultimately be. But the train has already, even at this slow pace, travelled a considerable distance, and behind it follows a dense black crowd, even on the line of road not ordinarily permitted. It is only the Muscovitish peasantry, following thickly.

A few days ago this ancient capital was again ablaze with royalty and all its necessary—wonted at any rate—adjuncts. The King and Queen of Denmark, with the Princess Thyra, the King and Queen of Greece—the latter Olga, daughter of the Grand Duke Constantine—and the beautiful hereditary Grand Duchess Dagmar, arrived early by train last Sunday morning direct from St. Petersburg. The weather was glorious, and vied with the citizens, as it would seem, in doing due honour to the royal guests. Again the city was decorated with flags and decorations of all sorts, triumphal arches, and threatened illuminations in the evening. These people are certainly a loyal *and* enthusiastic race.

The main point of attraction—the glorious Kremlin—was, we heard, to be their first place of *rendezvous*. They were, at three o'clock in the afternoon, it was quickly bruited abroad, to proceed on foot with their respective suites from each to other of the several glittering cathedrals of which the ancient pile so proudly boasts. Ah, how gorgeously the sun shone down upon them ; also upon the golden domes by which we seemed veritably surrounded—by which we were all overpoweringly out-topped. Again we obtained a standing-place close to one of the main entrances, and saw the regal party emerge in procession from one cathedral and enter a second. The King and Queen of Denmark walked first and separately, the latter wearing a simple, though elegantly made, tight fitting, as far as I remember, grey silk dress, with soft white bonnet. The King wore full uniform. The royal lady's smile was at once a curiously bright and happy one. Her two beautiful elder daughters, brought up in such exquisite simplicity, and with miniature dowries, when compared with those handed

to many other princesses, each destined nevertheless, to share sway over two of the most important countries in the world—and this mainly on behalf of their goodness and charming simplicity ! Has she not, indeed, every right to look thus, even though the ultimate responsibilities attending those two so dear to her prove nevertheless great ?

The King and Queen of Greece and the hereditary Grand Duchess Olga came next, after a space, walking three abreast—the ladies “ tripping lightly ”—also attired in rich soft grey and mauve coloured dresses.

There was little formality, little ceremony actually, as regarded their reception ; only that the plaudits of those assembled were hearty.

Again they had entered another massive cathedral, and still with indomitable patience and show of delight the crowd shifted their quarters and awaited the exit of the regal *cortége* at the opposite gateway. The presence of the Governor-General Dolgorouky formed, as a matter of course, an important *feature* in the busy scene, also Prince Galitzky

was pointed out to me, with several other notabilities. Other notabilities, of a somewhat different class, however, were also on the scene; proving that human nature is the same all the world over, whether it be presented for our delectation within a dozen miles of old father Thames, or seventeen hundred miles distant. My companion sagaciously and prudently whispered to me that in the midst of such a throng it might be just as well if I looked sharply after my purse, etc. "Look to yourself," I might have responded. At that self-same moment, although in blissful ignorance of the fact, his own purse, containing every penny he possessed, had become the doubtless prized prey of some miserable pickpocket.

If, on this day, Sunday, the Royal party had performed their part quietly and unostentatiously on foot, it was scarcely so on the following day, when in meet and suitable fashion, duly preceded by outriders, the *cortége* attended by a band, and the line of *route* guarded by a right gallant troop of foot and mounted soldiery, made its appear-

ance on the excellent race-ground—by which I mean excellent in the matter of extent—not stopping to compare it with either Ascot or Epsom. The “course” lies at least three miles, if not more, beyond the confines of the city; and, to be frank, we saw no race run equalling our first-class English “heats.” However!

At the entrance to the “grand stand,” stood a splendid array of officers and ladies waiting to receive the illustrious visitors. And wait there they did more than one whole hour beyond the time appointed for the “reception.” Some of the most lovely bouquets imaginable, for presentation on arrival, were held by several of the senior officers—one composed entirely of crimson flowers, another entirely of pink, each having dark blue streamers in the form of pendants—for the ladies of the House of Denmark. A white bouquet, with crimson appendages of a like character, was attractive and dainty in the extreme. Soldiers were to be seen on all sides, the crowd pressing forward of course *inch by inch*, and systematically endeavouring

hard to break the bounds assigned them—those in authority contending as systematically that they should desist and do nothing of the kind. The mob chaffed the policemen. The officials, on their part duly enraged, replied gruffly, and looked as if they wished heartily that the ceremony was ended. And then up would come a grenadier on a heavily-weighted charger, without more ado, pressing the irate crowd sternly backwards, as it would seem often at the peril of their lives.

The royal party arrived at last; or rather those whose office it ever is to precede them. Amongst others, a separate conveyance solely for the use of the “Arab,” wontedly attired in sky-blue, who is ever in close attendance upon the Grand Duchess Dagmar.

And now the long-expected party dashed boldly on to the ground, the royal carriages being each led by nine black-as-night prancing steeds, three abreast, and all with bright silver trappings. The effect was magnificent—the dresses of the respective drivers, of brightest colour, all tending to enhance the attraction of the scene.

An hour hence we had quitted the vicinity of the race-course, and driven over the adjacent moor extending for miles around, leaving St. Peter's Park somewhat to the right. The air—how invigorating; but the sight to be presently beheld, perhaps yet more so. A veritable army of soldiers. A camp indeed—thousands of them rather—lay outstretched before us in the golden light of the setting sun. The troops, whose name seemed legion, were nearly all turned out for the purpose of drill. They charged in glorious fashion in heavy detachments; other detachments standing stock-still, and with marked attention awaiting their turn. The dust rose in clouds, wrapping as in a shroud this fleeting group of horsemen and that; but still, even at this great distance, we could tell, by the dull rumbling as of something rushing through the air, that many thousands were passing onwards—onwards—at full gallop. Truly, the ranges of troops seemed to line the horizon—to stretch far beyond our own mind's ken. And then, when we had begun to wonder what would be the end of

all this, whether, indeed, Russia's army knew no limits, our carriage came suddenly to a standstill. We had been compelled to halt and take our place, not knowing wherefore, in the long line of equipages with which we had now come abreast.

I stood up hastily and looked right and left, north and south, far and near. Soldiers—soldiers everywhere. Only the soft grass beneath our feet and the glorious blue sky above. Why were they waiting? Why was a special line of road kept sacred, to all appearances?

And the twilight, too, was even now coming on.

And then a loud huzzaing fell upon our ears. We heard it, even though at first far away.

And then the word was given, a line was formed on either side, and between this glittering array, on the wild Moscow moor, the Royal party dashed past, *en route* for the already brilliantly lighted-up palace at the extreme end of St. Peter's Park, where they were to dine. We could distinctly see, in

the long vista, and in between the trees, each window gaily lighted up, as if in greeting; and then we turned our backs upon the whole scene regretfully, only that we had other sights to see that night, and must not linger.

But to return to that which is grave—nevertheless real. Is it not ever so in this life—we mingle gladness with sorrow, tragedy even with comedy ?





CHAPTER VIII.

BORODINO—NAMES' -DAYS *versus* BIRTHDAYS—AND
PENALTIES ATTACHING—LEGENDARY LORE—A
PEASANT'S FAITH—AS ALSO BELIEF IN AN-
OTHER TOPIC—AND A HINT TO ENGLISHMEN
WHEN NOT AT HOME.

MOSCOW, SEPTEMBER 7th—

August 26th, Russian style, 1876.

BORODINO. I have already alluded to this noted spot, but simply as a locality not to be overlooked by the traveller on his entering the great Russian territory. A *fête* has to-day been celebrated there, eliciting no small amount of ardour on the part of those taking part therein.

The anniversary of the battle so nobly fought there—lost and won—in the mighty struggle of 1812—the last battle fought between the Russians and the French, when Moscow fell a prey to fire, and the retreat therefrom became, as it must ever remain to the

end of time, a memorable matter of history. The sixty-fourth anniversary.

A special train started early in the morning from this place, conveying some of its most enthusiastic citizens, with the view of duly *fêting* the occasion. Some members of the party, being adepts in the matter of science, geology, antiquities, and so forth, took the lead, acting the part of *cicerones*. A bright, felicitous, sunny morning. Only that, the dead, alas, could not be called back to life, or those who had suffered in the past receive compensation.

Ancient generals were there, and gay ladies. Arrived at Borodino—several hours' journey from Moscow—the *Kraistnee hôt*, or ceremony of "The Procession of the Cross," inaugurated the proceedings; which performed, all paid a solemn visit to the lady-abbess of the convent close at hand. The due order and precise arrangements of the convent in question struck one forcibly. Some relics were to be exhibited, and the key was required with which to open some *special* box.

“*Klyoutch*?”—“key”—observed the lady abbess, softly and demurely—when, as one of my companions afterwards remarked, the article in question seemed to be placed in the lock at the self-same instant. This instance, of course, only as a sample of the entire order prevailing.

A petition was then sent in to those in authority, that a requiem might be chanted then and there for the Slavonians. Permission was accorded. The group—many of the members composing it, as has already been said, scientific men—afterwards explored the field itself, making investigations, discussing this important feature in warfare and that; thus combining, it would seem, pleasure and relaxation with at once the remembrance of past glory and the pursuit of knowledge.

Ah! what people these are for *fêtes*. It is a perpetual round of the same. If not the name's day of your housemaid, it is sure to be either that of your cook or child's-maid, or that of one or other of your relatives, friends, or it may be only acquaintances. But be it

whom it may, courtesy at any rate requires that you duly recognise the occasion. Birth-days are never kept here, but the name's-day, or *fête* of that particular saint after whom you may chance to be called, must not on any account be overlooked. And *à propos* of this, no one here is ever christened by any other name than that duly appearing in the Russian calendar of saints. One Christian name also is only permitted, unless, indeed, specially petitioned for, when the rule is occasionally relaxed. If the *fête* is held in honour of either a noble or any of those constituting the upper rank, visits of ceremony are duly paid during the course of the day in question, by all either his or her friends, as the case may be. Presents, too, are for the most part given—boxes of bon-bons, bouquets, and so forth. On some of the *fête* days which have fallen in the wake since my arrival, I have witnessed a regular round of visits paid at this residence and that, within the course of a very few hours, too, upon all the Alexanders in one's circle, or the Serges, or the Marthas, or the Annas, as the case

may be—or the Maries—only imagine the phalanx offered by the latter—and how many more. And not an unimportant item either, to be remembered, that there is a saint in the Greek calendar for nearly every day in the year. Those receiving such visits of felicitation are expected, if “at home,” to have wine, or champagne even, cakes, and coffee in readiness, as their guests may prefer; but those who wish to avoid such penalty—also, more probably, are weary of the repeated congratulation - business — plead “not at home.” Black dresses for ladies are generally tabooed on such days, both as regards the receiver or those received—coloured, as also gay ones, being deemed the correct thing. Intimate friends indulge occasionally in presents of infinite value. The domestic arrangement in such matters is at once peculiar and suggestive. Your housemaid Martha, on St. Martha’s day, duly apprises you of the fact by placing on your breakfast-table at twelve o’clock a delicious sort of bread-cake called *krendle*—elaborated with raisins—the bakers’ windows fairly teem with such—

made up something after the fashion of a twisted serpent, or reminding you pleasantly—it may be the reverse, it does not in the least matter which—of a tender lover's knot. You duly thank and congratulate her, but know the penalty full well—that you must in return offer her a present, of value at any rate twice the amount. The *fête* of St. Elias has fallen in my path amongst the rest, held in honour of him, I presume, who, we hear, was taken up by a chariot of fire into heaven. At any rate the legend rife here amongst the peasants corresponds tolerably therewith, and runs something on this wise, the verbiage being literal—That there will be thunder on that day, because the saint in question “walks in his carriage.” On such days as these it is nothing unusual to be roused from slumber in the early morning by some wretched-looking beggar, shouting and howling before one's window, entreating for money to purchase prayers on behalf of this deceased person and that.

And such beggars! I never saw more *deplorable* ones—like the man in the old

story, "tattered and torn, and all forlorn."

On such days, also, friends visit the graves of those whom they have "loved and lost," scatter flowers upon their resting-place, and re-supply the oil in the small lamp which is frequently kept burning before a tomb in the Greek cemeteries. Ah! how beautiful these last are, too—how exquisitely kept by the nuns, whose office it is to overlook such matters.

But again of names'-days. I have already run into the theme, and, it being an unquestionably prolific one, will venture yet further on at the risk of being deemed prosaic. But, truth to tell, if one would study faithfully the national, somewhat complex character, in conjunction with all the associations, social and yet more religious, brought to bear upon it from earliest childhood, we must carefully place each in juxtaposition, taking keen note of the influences ruling from the very beginning—the general working of the entire system.

The name's-day of St. Serge—and here-

with I revert from said digression to the main point. The legend about to be penned, and which is believed in faithfully by the majority of the people, but, above all, most devoutly by the lower classes, was told me the other day when visiting the small and certainly uninviting abode of a peasant. The adjuncts of the scene were, confessedly, not prepossessing, even though the amount of faith exhibited won my fancy somewhat. The woman of the house had set her heart upon showing me, ere my departure, a picture of St. Serge, the patron of the village in which she had been born and bred, and whose *fête*-day was just about to be commemorated. She evidently held Saint in question in huge estimation.

“Look at it,” she exclaimed, admiringly.

I did so. The subject was certainly trite and simple, but scarcely served to explain itself. St. Serge—only a youth—was fleeing away, as it seemed—whither was not in the least made apparent. His father and mother were lying dead and in their coffins, imme-

diately in the foreground. I looked questioningly at the peasant.

“He ran away from his father and mother,” she returned, “merely for the sake of leading a good life—and they neither of them could live without him—died at the same time.”

“And then?”

“He was buried at Kiev with all the other saints and martyrs.”

She had now risen to her feet, and stood by, gesticulating vehemently.

“They buried him low in the ground, as usual,” she pursued, “but his body would not rest there. It rose once more above the surface, after a long space, and to the astonishment of every one it had known neither decay nor corruption. His body was every bit as perfect as when they had placed it there—could not perish.”

One of my companions looked incredulous, suggested that all this was perhaps, after all, somewhat of an impossibility.

The peasant responded hotly—even angrily—

“Never dare to say so to any of us,” she exclaimed. “We have all been taught to believe this from our infancy. You,” nodding her head meanwhile emphatically, “from the far-away land may be a Christian, or you may not—I don’t know anything at all about it—but never here say anything of the kind again; no, not to any of us. Go only to Kiev; see for yourself. Look at his body lying there, still as perfect as I have said. Think of the cures that are brought about by only going there. Look at the pilgrimages that are made to our most holy city, only for the purpose of beholding the bodies of those who lie there.”

I did not offer any response. The story was traditional, and she implicitly believed in its truth. She would allow her enthusiasm thus to ride rampant, meanwhile not hesitating to cheat her employer, supposing she had one, to the very best of her ability, though serving him cringingly in everything else. What deduction, I would ask, can possibly be drawn? A phase of religion, at any rate, as *also a phase of national character, but scarcely*

admirable, either of them, as regards general development. A somewhat different version of the story is, I believe, the true one; allowing the peasant still to hug herself with the conviction that her own is the most veritable. Perhaps, on the whole, it may be safer not to vouch for the details of either.

More trustworthy evidence, however, says that St. Serge when only ten years old, having a great desire to "pray always," left his home, as already cited, and adopted a hermit's life in a huge forest, sixty versts—one verst and three-quarters, *en passant*, constituting a mile—from Moscow. He remained there for some years quite alone; and then the news got afloat. A holy hermit! Others flocked to join him instantaneously. In the course of time a community was formed, and by one consent the "brothers" elected St. Serge as their abbot. When a little more than three centuries ago Russia was invaded by the Tartars, the Grand Duke Demetrieff sent to the monastery of St. Serge entreating his blessing. The saint not only gave a hearty benediction on behalf of those

engaging in the battle about to be fought, but sent two of his monks to take part personally therein. The Grand Duke Demetrieff came off victor in the contest, thanks entirely, as he ever afterwards averred, to the potent blessing of the holy abbot. The monastery of St. Serge still remains. The two monks, named Peresvert and Oslanba, fell fighting on the battle-field.

But my friend the peasant was still gesticulating vehemently and devoutly. I listened.

“Think of St. Barbara!”

“St. Barbara?” I repeated.

“Yes. You remember her wonderful fate, perhaps?”

“Unfortunately I do not.” The woman clasped her hands, now reverently. “The most beautiful girl, then, in all Russia. So beautiful, indeed, that her father would not let her be seen, and shut her up in a large room at the top of his castle.” A maid, however, who was found for her—“nurse,” as they were called in those days—was a Christian, and prevailed upon the noble’s daughter to adopt Christianity. The father

was thereat highly indignant, and Barbara fled away to Kiev. Some mischievously-inclined individual informed the father as to this fact, who at once pursued his truant daughter, duly discovered her place of retreat, and had her put to death forthwith for her delinquency as regarded filial duty and obedience. The tradition is that even as she knelt and was captured by her enemies, her kneeling form became petrified, and the bending figure is still exhibited to strangers visiting Kiev—a sort of Lot's wife memorial, as it instantly occurred to me—her arm outstretched and her finger extended, as if in the face of her accusers. But I might multiply such recitals by hundreds.

Such was the tale as it “was told to me.” The tales told, and believed in, of a like nature, meet one on all sides—are infinitely too numerous even to think of. By the way—touching foreigners, as Russians regard them—their creed and general status in the religious sphere. A Russian, if he be not amongst the educated classes—the only upper class, so to speak—at once sets them all down,

if not Turks or from beyond the Caucasus, as Germans. As to the fact of Englishmen and Frenchmen existing in the world, to say nothing of other nations which likewise take the liberty of existing, they cannot at all grasp the fact—do not even try to do so. I, myself, have been personally alluded to as a German again and again, although a suggestion has occasionally been thrown out that I hail from the Caucasus. It is pre-eminently funny at times even to listen to such suggestions. And then, in the matter of religion—they evidently are at their wits' end as regards drawing some inference, however indefinite, from the whole aspect of affairs. They are keenly doubtful as to any one being a Christian in reality but themselves, and this more especially as all new-comers, they take cognizance, do not make use of the sign of the cross upon every possible occasion. They glance dubiously at one who refrains from following precise suit in such matters, and a peasant who accompanied me to the English Church, last Sunday, and was prompted to wait until the end of the service

—listening, meanwhile, in the greatest state of at once consternation and weariness at the quiet tone pervading everything, when of course compared with their own exciting and elaborate ritual—was afterwards heard to observe, when discoursing thereupon to a group assembled for the purpose, and describing the dress of the officiating clergyman, that he was attired “for all the world just like a black *diable*.” This not uttered disrespectfully either—simply as adopting the wonted mode of verbal description. One word, however, as to the failing, thanks to the indulgence in which they are frequently led to think that “foreigners” are not as devoted as themselves to the Christian faith—that in foreign climes the Englishman would seem, in many instances, to live as if he at any rate could do without paying the smallest attention to the rites of religion. Once away from his own country, he waives too often all outward accordance with the worship of either his church or nation, and who can wonder that, accordingly, the wholly ignorant Russian peasant draws his own prompt and

definite conclusion. We should do the same at home, did foreigners, on visiting England, follow the same course. Truly, man is judged by his works.





CHAPTER IX.

URGENT PREPARATIONS AGAINST ANOTHER WINTER'S CAMPAIGN—DODGES ADOPTED BY THE "LYOUDI"—A PEASANT'S HOMESTEAD—RUSSIAN KITCHEN—ALSO THE RUSSIAN CUISINE—THE DVORNIK AS A CLASS—THE DVORNIK IN PARTICULAR—ARRIVALS FROM BULGARIA—AND A BULGARIAN PRINCESS.

MOSCOW, SEPTEMBER 28TH—

16th, Russian style, 1876.

A CHANGE has all at once come o'er the sweet spirit of the dream. Summer has passed away, as it were, quite suddenly from our grasp in these regions, the extreme heat has followed suit almost as suddenly, and winter, it would seem, is already on our heels. Personally, I am somewhat scared to think that such is indeed the fact; but there seems small appeal as regards the decision in question arrived at by every one.

The Russians are an exquisitely impulsive

people, and the instant the cold wind begins to show its face, and the leaves show their intention of falling all at once thickly, such being even now the case, they set themselves to work forthwith and make all fitting preparations against the advent of the foe. The members of the upper class—the nobility, as they ever regard themselves—men and women alike—all send off post-haste to their respective furriers, in whose hands have been lodged throughout the past summer, and according to universal custom, with the view of their being duly cared for and preserved from the invasion of moths, their splendidly warm fur cloaks, as also fur boots, gloves, etc.

And such cloaks ! Ordinarily of sable from top to toe—costly, as a matter of course—with covering of rich silk on the outside, and thickly wadded to boot.

By a similar *coup de main*, so to speak, a violent raid is all at once made upon the, for many months' past recumbent, double windows, which are now promptly dragged from exile, and placed rigidly in front of those *already* officiating in said capacity. A thick

layer of white cotton-wool, as if, it would seem, inviting the speedy presence of snow, is snugly laid between, at the base of the two windows, and frequently upon this are sprinkled morsels of gold and silver tissue, or scarlet cloth, with, on rare occasions, a small lighted oil lamp, for the supposed purpose of purifying the air. The inner window is then thickly pasted round with putty, hermetically, so that even, if wished for, neither windows nor glass doors, if such there be, thus dealt by, can possibly be opened until officially removed by the glazier when summer next appears. The carrying out of the wonted formula, although doubtless most needful, has served to oppress me in spite of myself. I feel, in fact, like one incarcerated.

Sound from without is also considerably deadened thereby. How will it be when snow lies thickly on the ground and the sledges are scudding about in all directions?

Mais en attendant.

Yesterday another stride was made on the same behalf. The stoves—those, at any rate, in the house where I am now quartered—

were then set light to for the first time. All is done by extremes in these regions, and if you have aught approaching to a fire, behold—as a result—a furnace. Each stove, ordinarily of white polished marble, or, it may be, only of brick, is several feet wide and deep in dimensions, extending, of course, in height from floor to ceiling. The cavity within, when the many huge logs of wood laid side by side therein are all ablaze, reminds one, on bending low and peeping into it, of a miniature glass furnace, such as I have many a time beheld in the north of England. The long rake, too, used to displace the logs and make room for others, might seem to correspond aptly with the enormous rods employed by the half-blinded, over-heated, and indefatigable furnace-man. But here the similitude ends. A roaring blaze within—the merry crackling of wood, in lieu of either coke or coal—and the charred remains all around—such is the picture presented.

Not until every particle of the logs within have been thoroughly burnt, and there is a *total* absence of all flame, must the door of

the stove be closed. The charred embers are raked previously over and over, to see that no unburnt particles remain, and then all is closed in hermetically, and therefore safely, for several hours, the delightfully-heated rooms hereafter only telling the tale that red hot embers, thickly clustered, are so near at hand.

If one misses the cheery English fireplace, of which, by the way, I hear a few have already been imported into Moscow—personally, I have not as yet seen any specimens—with all its glow of comfort and brilliancy, one misses also, to be frank, a corresponding amount of dust, and, it may be, even smoke. The rooms, too—I am trying hard to sum up the advantages—are warmed throughout—not hot in one quarter, cold in another. And yet, in spite of all this, give me in preference an English open grate—well filled, of course, with best “Wallsend”—with also, be it added, a well-filled purse in my pocket with which to replenish all when the cellar is low.

A spacious grate—but black and cold—and the weather bleak—what a mockery! Only

that England boasts such mockeries, alas, how often. But of Russia—not England—I am forgetting—with its extremely rich and its, also, extremely poor—with those to whom the expense of stovesful and stovesful of logs is as nothing, and with those to whom the expense of even a single log is well-nigh an impossibility. In the latter case the difficulty is met by several families living together in one hut, and making common cause as regards both stove and oven. One item worthy of note, by the way—that in the “country,” where the once “*lyoudi*,” or serfs, are all as poor as church mice, and feel the cold proportionately—for scanty food here as elsewhere gives ever scanty protection against the inroads made by the same—it is no unfrequent thing for the peasants to wash themselves—when they *do* indulge in such a luxury—within the very oven itself, and then sleep with their children upon the top thereof. These Russian kitchens, even those of the rich, are sights to behold! Not pleasant ones altogether. In respect thereto the proverb certainly holds good—“Where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly

to be wise." The less certainly that is known of such regions, as regards the general workings I mean, if the appetite is to be duly studied and tempted, the better. How, in fact, such excellent cooking is almost without exception the rule, strikes one at least as marvellous. But such is, nevertheless, the case. The eating is exceptionally *recherché*. It was impossible to help noting this fact, even at the very first Russian refreshment-room at which we halted on the line of railway. The cooking of a fowl even, I remember, was of the daintiest; utterly superior to anything of the kind I had ever tasted elsewhere.

But of these "homes" in the country to which I have just alluded—which serve to strike one at once as the abodes of naught but poverty. Homesteads they might aptly be termed, seeing that they are the ultimate refuge of all the scattered far and wide members of the various families referred to, who find themselves at any time destitute and roofless, it may be either through their own fault or the fault of others. They con-

stitute the unalienable property, however poverty-stricken in aspect, of the head, or heads, of the family—cannot be taken from their grasp, having being allotted them in the days of serfdom—so that, as a noble observed the other day, there need never be any who are homeless and wanderers in Russia, for there is ever a roof somewhere under which they have a right to obtain shelter, and in like fashion surrounding fields or territory, also unalienable, in which black bread may be cultivated, with potatoes and cabbage to any amount. “Money,” he added, “they do not require there”—“happy peasants” I am tempted to exclaim—“seeing that they grow their own flax, weave it, and so on.” A state of bliss this, doubtless, to those whose happiness in this world is of exquisitely small dimensions—a state of difficult, nay, inconceivable endurance to others. The daughters of such families find their way frequently to one or other of the great cities with the view of “bettering” themselves and growing rich. They obtain situations in domestic service, and as a rule do not shrink from work, even

if they prove veritable plagues otherwise in the respective households; those who are specially industrious, moderately sober, and prudent, store their *roubles* until the arrival of summer—the long looked-for summer—when off they go once more to the family homestead laden with gifts for every member of the peasant crew. Badly received, too, would they be did they venture to make their appearance upon the scene in question without being thus equipped. They—the absentees—are accounted as the rich members of the family by those always crowding round that “country” stove, and a smart-looking dress for Anisia, a ribbon for Vera, a head-kerchief for Dunia, and it would be impossible to say how many other items of remembrance for how many more—for cousins even in a far removed degree—are expected almost as a matter of right. I hear that many spend every penny they possess—even go into debt—thus to carry out all that is expected from them on this behalf.

On whatever side one turns signs of an impending war seem to meet one's ear. On

all sides men who have once served in the army or navy are called off to rejoin either one or the other, and a great deal of excitement, if on this behalf alone, exists. Only two days ago the *dvornik*, or keeper of the court and gateway leading to this establishment, was suddenly called away from his post. He must at once abandon everything and serve his country. Before evening arrived he had, in strict accordance with such orders, taken his departure for the country for the purpose of saying *adieu* to his friends.

The *dvornik* is a thoroughly domestic institution. No establishment is complete without such an adjunct, and as a rule, once instituted, he—*dvornik* in question—is a permanency. He wears short red trousers—a shirt, frequently red also—and here his toilet pretty nearly ends. Only last week, I asked, “And this *dvornik*”—pointing towards him—“he has lived here always?”

“Ever since he was a boy.”

• “And he will continue to live here——”

“Until he dies, in all human probability,”
was the interruption. “It is a vocation in

itself. The chances are also that he has no other ambition in life than to keep this self-same court-yard in order and answer the bell at night, even if he be roused from slumber fifty times, to the end of his natural life."

And yet my informant has, as it happens, been proved wholly wrong in his prognostications as to said *dvornik's* future. Only a few hours and his fate has, it may be surmised, been wholly altered. His ambition may be roused at last—who knows—and he may return from the field superior in his own estimation to occupying the office originally held. So much for progress. Another item I should also like to propound in the shape of a query—whether the fact of fighting for his country is in the least likely to rouse him to a fitting sense of his domestic duties on behalf of wife and children? I somewhat doubt it, seeing that the present course adopted by him is the rule here, not the exception. His wife and he, having fought like cat and dog, to say nothing of other indiscretions, he took it upon himself to thrash her, and they have resided separately ever

since; she—unfortunate woman that she is—working hard in the fields to keep body and soul together. And such seems the course adopted by thousands; but more of this another time. Married life out here does not appear to be regarded as peculiarly sacred.

Families are arriving now well-nigh daily from the seat of Servian hostilities. Yesterday a large family of quite the upper class was welcomed at the railway station. They had been shamefully treated by the Turks—the atrocities committed by whom would seem to be unparalleled—and had come to Moscow for protection—rather as a place of refuge. They at once went off to a monastery many miles away. Another lady—a princess I believe—who has been grievously insulted by these fearless perpetrators of cruelty, has just arrived, and according to the directions of the acting committee here for rendering assistance to the Slavonians, she has been lodged forthwith in the house of one of the principal citizens, at which abode I have frequently visited. I may possibly have the *honour* of meeting her next Sunday. The

Bulgarian princess has arrived quite destitute, and even now funds are being raised wherewith to procure her the ordinary necessaries of clothing. Every attention is paid her, and her sufferings have served to work up the sympathy of the Muscovites to what would seem a climax. Even whilst writing the snow has fallen.





CHAPTER X.

A SMALL AGGRAVATION—A PRIEST'S FUNERAL—
AND PRIVATE BAPTISM OF A NOBLE'S DAUGHTER.

MOSCOW, OCT. 4TH—

Sept. 22nd, Russian style, 1876.

THIS contrariety of dates, by the way—how unpleasantly perplexing at times. Will the day ever come when such diversity will be rectified? I would fain hope so, if only on behalf of would-be accurate English “correspondents.” With every sensation of interest and pleasure I set myself about the task of describing—it may be this, it may be that—but at the very first gasp down goes my quill, and I am stranded. The very first stroke it has dealt in is incorrect, and I must re-write. The date as regards the flight of time in these regions is all at variance with that accounted as correct in nearly all other parts of the civilized world—everywhere, in *fact*, where the Greek Church does not pre-



Vincent Brooks, lith.

SHOPWOMAN IN HOLIDAY DRESS.



vail. I must at once begin to reckon. Twelve days' difference. Yes, yes; I have already grasped that fact. But in which direction must the deduction be indulged in—backwards or forwards? That is the question.

Ah, yes; now I know. How very easy, too, now that I have once grasped the right end of the diminutive problem. The Julian mode of reckoning—twelve days behind the more generally employed Gregorian—is the rule which serves me here. Why do I not always recollect? Only that I know full well the very next time I set pen to paper I shall tumble, in precisely the same bewildered fashion, into a like pitfall. If Pope Gregory XIII. deemed it a happy stroke to blot out three days from each four hundred years, by way of settling satisfactorily the discrepancy then existing in the matter of odd hours, minutes, and seconds, thereby adopting a mode of calculation hereafter to be adhered to by all nations with the exception of Russia, Greece, and—I speak of matters as they stood in 1752—the entire Christian population of Turkey, I can only say that personally I wish

such an act of erasure had been permitted to extend in all directions alike—that, to be brief, such a material difference had long since ceased to exist. The fact that we are twelve days in advance of the Russians does not in the least serve to reconcile one thereto, and if at the fag end of one month and the beginning of another, the amount of reckoning involved seems altogether inadequate to the occasion. The Russian clergy, many of them peasants by birth, and marvellously illiterate—have ever been averse, I was told the other day, to any change being made in their calendar—this in order, as it was also added, that their seasons of both fasting and feasting may not be disturbed. The reason adduced, however, may be somewhat at fault. A not popular set of men by any means, although possessing a prodigious amount of sacerdotal influence over the peasant-class—I allude herein more directly to the lowest class of priests, those termed “white”—more may possibly have been laid at their door on this score than is either fair or just.

Whilst at work early this morning, preparing

work which I was anxious to send off to England, my attention was suddenly called off, first by a hurried exclamation, and then the inharmonious—ah, how utterly discordant!—ding-donging of a couple of church bells. “Listen,” fell upon my ears.

“One of the secular priests belonging to St. Gregory’s church, close at hand, died two days ago, and is to be buried this morning. They are still saying masses over his body, the church is even now packed, and it is a sight such as you may possibly not have a chance of witnessing again. It is eminently characteristic in each detail. Will you come?”

I willingly threw down my pen and assented. Without caring specially for such sights, to speak truthfully, I would take advantage of the opportunity offered—see what was to be seen. I had not reckoned upon the old priest’s interment being the imposing and lengthy ceremonial it proved.

We hurried off forthwith, and with the greatest difficulty obtained entrance. The place was simply thronged, and the hot air within was well-nigh suffocating. It seemed

at first as if I could not have borne it for more than five minutes at the most. And yet we wedged our way onwards and onwards amidst that dense standing mass of dirty, only once-a-week-washed peasants. Never could one forget that peculiar heat, the sort of indescribable vapour that arose, and the perspiration that streamed down the faces of all present, each of whom, from the oldest to the youngest, carried a lighted candle. The head of every woman present was wrapt in a thick shawl, the air without being already bitterly cold.

After many vigorous efforts, and by dint of coming in collision occasionally with this lighted candle and that, the wax therefrom—tallow rather—dropping at intervals upon our cloaks, we found ourselves at last in the centre of the edifice, immediately behind a dozen officiating priests, clad in magnificent robes, and before whom lay their late *confrère*, duly reposing in his coffin, and dressed, according to custom, in his ecclesiastical robes. Tall lighted candles draped with crape surrounded him, and the solemn chant “went

on"—had been going on thus around him for many hours—I believe ever since life had become extinct. One fact I do know—that the dead in Russia are never left alone, not for a single instant, or in the dark either. Relays of singing priests are always ready to perform their part, and take the places of those who are weary of thus watching. It is the wont, too, for friends to keep watch in an adjacent room, but I do not for one instant wish to compare such details in the matter of religious etiquette, so to speak, with our customs in England. The Russian temperament, as has been before observed, inclines to the strongest manifestation of the inmost feelings; possesses little power, neither desires to do so, in the matter of reining them. Whatever sentiment it wishes to give expression to, must receive all the colouring that outward adjuncts can possibly attach to it. If in raptures of delight about anything, they must, as a matter of necessity, discourse loudly and energetically thereupon, gesticulate violently, and the probability is, pace their rooms, until the marvel

is that they are not worn out, physically as well as mentally—setting the matter of boots entirely out of the question. If a case of perplexity be theirs, the fact is visible at a glance—they do not even seek to conceal the fact; if dismay or indignation, you, as a silent spectator, are cognisant of the circumstance long ere they themselves have expressed as much in words. And in the ever highest matter of feeling—that of mourning for the dead—they are equally demonstrative.

The corpse lay surrounded by what was of bright colours or purest white, the coffin being of the last-mentioned hue. Black was utterly proscribed. The face and hands were half buried in lace, whilst on the brow was placed a label, “fillet-fashion,” on which was written, “The Thrice Holy,” or *Trisagion*—“O Holy God! O Holy Mighty! O Holy Immortal! Have mercy upon us.”

Chant after chant ascended for the repose of his soul. A touching sight, truly.

The deacon’s deep bass voice rose ever and anon in leading fashion, the other voices following suit. No instrumental music, of

course; and none was wanted, as it seemed. This Russian singing is something quite unique—of a character wholly different to any I have ever heard before. It is weird in the extreme. I hope to procure some of these curious chants, if all goes well, ere returning. As for the deacons' voices, they are of wondrous capability, reaching down into the very depths. They are in fact specially chosen on account of this peculiar power, as I was told the other day.

And then came a pause. Not only the priests' voices, but those of the chanting men and boys, alike unsurpliced and uncassocked, be it added, and lacking, therefore, much of the attraction offered by either an ordinary English or Roman Catholic service, had ceased to be heard. All were now pressing forward to kiss the dead priest—his fellow-priests first, and then, duly in order, all his relations and friends. "The last kiss," it is termed—a practice, it would seem, derived from the heathen custom, of which we find such frequent mention. None, if possible, omit the performance of this duty, all seeking

to obtain the blessing or benefit thereby conferred. Some, however, are obliged to content themselves with merely kissing the corners of the coffin.

Many of the numerous *stichera*, as they are termed—poetically-worded prose effusions—made use of in the course of the service, are curiously quaint. I quote two or three, of which I have since procured a translation :—
“Come, my brethren, let us give our last kiss, our last farewell, to our deceased brother. He hath now forsaken his kindred and approacheth the grave, no longer mindful of vanity or the cares of the world. Where are now his kindred and friends? Behold, we are now separated! Approach. Embrace him who lately was one of yourselves.”—
“Where now is the graceful form? Where is youth? Where is the brightness of the eye? where the beauty of the complexion? Closed are the eyes, the feet bound, the hands at rest. Extinct is the sense of hearing, and the tongue locked up in silence.”

The words succeeding these are supposed to emanate from the lips of the dead himself,

lying mute before the eyes of all present:—
“Brethren, friends, kinsmen and acquaintance, view me here lying speechless, breathless, and lament. But yesterday we conversed together. Come near, all who are bound to me by affection, and with a last embrace pronounce the last farewell. No longer shall I sojourn among you, no longer bear part in your discourse. Pray earnestly that I be received into the Light of life.”

The absolution having been pronounced by the priest, a paper is placed in the dead man's hand—“The Prayer, Hope, and Confession of a faithful Christian soul.” This is accompanied by another prayer containing the written words of absolution. This custom has given rise to the belief in the minds of many foreigners that such missives are presented in the light of passports to a better world; but the idea seems to be as erroneous as it is absurd. Moreover, I believe that, strictly speaking, the custom is one of national origin, and that the Church has had nothing whatever to do with its adoption.

And then when all the lighted tapers had

been duly taken away from each by one of the attendants, and the church was once more sombre in aspect, the large white coffin, with its gilded adornments, but not a single particle of black, was removed slowly from the church, the crowd meanwhile following closely, and placed upon an enormous open bier or hearse, extensively mounted and heavily ornamented with white watered silk, purple and gilt draperies, a gilt crown surmounting all. The base of the ponderous vehicle was alone permitted to boast a frill of black cloth, as if for the sole purpose of hiding the wheels. The six horses, three abreast, were also enveloped in black cloth drapery, hanging well-nigh to the ground. On either side the coffin itself, and mounted therefore considerably aloft, stood two yellow *stoicharioned*, or robed deacons, wearing the *epimanikia* and *orarion*—the former being a portion of the priestly dress used for covering the arms, and signifying the thongs with which the hands of Christ were bound; the latter a stole worn over the left shoulder. The head of each deacon was adorned, as usual, with

long waving locks, which *en passant* I had watched them carefully arranging in church with their pocket-combs. They now faced each other, and kept watch together over the quiet dead. A procession of priests, duly robed, moved on *en avance*, and before them again marched the censor-bearers, and the singing men and boys.

A fantastic *cortége* it indeed seemed to quiet English eyes.

The point whence the procession started, Mala Greuzina, situated at the extreme east end of Moscow, lay several miles away from the cemetery for which they were all *en route*, and this veritably ancient Asiatic city had to be traversed at an angle in this most solemn fashion, seventy or eighty carriages following. From the very beginning to the end of the prescribed route Muscovites lined the road on either side; and it is only fair to add that I never beheld more respect shown, even to royalty itself; only that in this instance all was quietness, the enthusiasm only being permitted to give itself vent in the matter of excessive gesticulation and genuflection. Not

a head remained covered; not a single person by whom the procession passed permitted it to do so without crossing himself again and again, from forehead to chest, and from shoulder to shoulder. At the first church to which the procession came—the bells of which had begun to toll—clash rather—long before it hove in sight—the entire party halted. I imagined for the moment that this was the ultimate destination, and that I had been previously misinformed thereupon. But on the spur of the moment I had jumped at a wrong conclusion. A small bell was then and there rung, and the priests and their various acolytes, so to speak, clustered reverently by the hearse, the followers and spectators standing at a respectful distance, but nevertheless taking part in the service. After first incensing the hearse, themselves, and all around them, further prayers were said and chanted; then a signal was given, and all moved on again—only, however, to pause on the route again, for at every church we passed—and we must have encountered at least thirty or forty, if not

more, seeing that churches arise upon one's view in Moscow at well-nigh every three or four minutes' space—the ceremony in question was repeated. No sooner had one set of bells ceased to sound in one's ear than another took its place, and again all halted—and then again all marched onwards. How truly Muscovitish in character! Nearly every window as we passed along was thrown open, and figures bent forward ever and anon enacting their wonted part in the ceremonial. A pageant indeed!—and, after all, be it remembered, only one of frequent occurrence. Strange to say, only the week before, I had had the privilege of watching this identical old priest baptise the child of one of the most ancient nobles here, for which reason—not, by the way, that personally I admire the reason given in the least—the ceremony was enacted in his own private dwelling-house, and not in the church. Human nature is assuredly the same in main essentials all the world over. Poverty has ever as its mates necessity and, at any rate, enforced humility, wealth claiming kindred only at will, and as the occasion

best pleases the fancy, with the last-named holy attribute. But why this dissertation? Individually it concerns me nothing, and, moreover, had it not been for the indulgence in this special item of weakness on the part of the noble in question, the chances are that I should never have witnessed a like ceremonial. I marvelled, as I stood by, at the huge amount of difference existing between our English ceremonial and theirs. But the ceremony was nevertheless fraught with deep interest, each item being significant of some hidden meaning. One godfather and one godmother are all that is required, the latter of whom holds the infant, neither father nor mother being permitted, ordinarily, to be present. On the godmother also a large share of duty devolves, for there are certain gifts which she is bound by national custom to offer for acceptance on the occasion, and many a time, as I am told, the duty of selecting a female sponsor becomes, therefore, an invidious one. A handsome dress to the mother, no matter in what rank of life; a lace cap to the baby itself, a lace chemise for the same

highly-honoured small individual, and an elaborate silk pocket-handkerchief to the officiating priest. And these, when of the best quality—and they are invariably so—mount up considerably as regards expense, seeing that everything here is marvellously dear in the way of personal attire. I am perfectly astonished at the prices named, and in case of war they will be doubled, if not trebled, at least. But the young noble's baptism. The godfather, standing immediately in front of the large font brought specially for the purpose from the adjoining church, and at the right hand of his fellow-sponsor, simply presents a small golden cross which the little one will wear, it is supposed, ever afterwards. Immediately behind the font, and facing the entire audience—for a large party of friends had been invited to witness the ceremony—was placed the "holy picture" of the household, without which no homestead in Russia, whether rich or poor, is considered complete, and before which a lighted oil lamp ever stands burning. A "picture of God," as the children are taught from their earliest

years to call it. Before this the priests bowed on entering. And then the details.

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Many, however, whose souls were, we may take it for granted, roused to special enthusiasm on realising the cause on behalf of which the performance had been taken in hand, volunteered five roubles. So wags the world.

The chief performers—also some of the audience, members of the Servian Committee, wore the now well-known cross, significant of office and at once intention, upon their shoulder. The plays, three in number, were neither long nor complex, the plot of the first hinging entirely upon the fact of a girl of fifteen—the fashionable lady referred to—falling over head and ears in love with a grey-headed patriarch. And so again “love rules the world”—in Moscow, it would seem, as elsewhere.

And the rain is alike pitiless at times, for as all quitted the theatre it pelted down ruthlessly. No half measures in these regions. When it does rain, the water descends straight down, something after the fashion of an avalanche, and you hear it beating against the earth as if aggrieved at meeting with

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frequently tumble off is a perfect marvel, but the drivers of the same take every fresh bounce as a matter of course, and neither show signs of perturbation nor vexation thereat. First down on one side, and then on the other; and then on again as heretofore. And, ah, the bewildering nomenclatures—the streets more or less all alike, and so confusing to a stranger, that, even now, I only feel adequately certain as to names when driving along the principal thoroughfares—Tverskaiya, Sadova, to wit—and a few others.

I glance up hastily at the corner of the street with the view of catching the name. It is written, of course, in Russian characters, and whilst I stop to remember that “p” stands for “r,” so and so for so and so—and it is difficult to express here how many more transpositions of letters, so to speak, exist—whilst, I say, I pause to arrange matters duly in my own mind, and decide upon the pronunciation, onward goes the vehicle, and away flit from before my vision the more or less puzzling representatives of an alphabet, after all not quite so long as our own.

The Russian papers are to-day a trifle more pacific, but still every one predicts war—certainly the possession of the disputed provinces by the Russian troops—this with the view of preventing further carnage and violence—should the present short armistice not serve to bring about all that it is desired shall be effected therein. It is said that the various lines of railroad throughout Russia are now all being carefully inspected and supervised by competent head-officials—the inference drawn therefrom, that each line of road may be in a due state of safety and readiness should the day present itself when troops must be despatched post-haste by this route and that to the one main centre. Stray members of the community in all classes, who have once served their country, are now being summoned off daily to rejoin the ranks, whether they desire it or not.

The troop of nurses and female assistants in the camp hospital—as already alluded to in a previous letter—in due course of organization at St. Petersburg, has already been *fully made up*. No more nurses, or even

assistants—as I am told—are wanted. And herein I speak confidently. An unmarried lady here, in whose society I have frequently been thrown, had set her heart—like how many others—upon joining the “Sisterhood” in Servia; although, as she herself averred whilst chatting the other evening, she knew full well the fate of one set of nurses who had already taken up their position boldly near the dead and dying. She applied formally to the lady who has been carrying out all the arrangements on this behalf in the more modern capital—a beautiful woman of rank—but her services have been formally declined, although she expressed her perfect readiness to provide all that was requisite in the matter of outfit, uniform, etc. The printed circular in reply, which, by the way, I had the honour of reading, stated that the ranks were now all filled up. Those who have already been sent southwards have, as a matter of course, been franked both ways, had uniforms provided with cross duly affixed on shoulder as emblem of office, and been allowed fifty roubles a month so long as their

services are required. Money has been poured in so lavishly for the purpose upon the lady in question, that it is even said she has been compelled to depute the counting of it to other hands than her own, being personally quite full of occupation in the shape of receiving, not only volunteers for service, but those associated in a variety of ways with the charitable work. Her house was described the other day as nothing more nor less at present than a huge restaurant. People always coming—others always going—from morning till night, bent on the execution of this errand of business and that.

Last evening, a theatrical representation came off in this ancient city, in one of the small theatres, on behalf of the funds required for the Servian Committee. The whole affair was strictly amateur, the *prima donna's* part being taken by a fashionable lady here, and a considerable sum must have been amassed, the theatre being tolerably filled, and the tickets, for an exhibition of the kind, moderately high as regarded principal seats—three roubles, about seven shillings and sixpence.

Many, however, whose souls were, we may take it for granted, roused to special enthusiasm on realising the cause on behalf of which the performance had been taken in hand, volunteered five roubles. So wags the world.

The chief performers—also some of the audience, members of the Servian Committee, wore the now well-known cross, significant of office and at once intention, upon their shoulder. The plays, three in number, were neither long nor complex, the plot of the first hinging entirely upon the fact of a girl of fifteen—the fashionable lady referred to—falling over head and ears in love with a grey-headed patriarch. And so again “love rules the world”—in Moscow, it would seem, as elsewhere.

And the rain is alike pitiless at times, for as all quitted the theatre it pelted down ruthlessly. No half measures in these regions. When it does rain, the water descends straight down, something after the fashion of an avalanche, and you hear it beating against the earth as if aggrieved at meeting with

resistance. The Bulgarian lady, to whom I referred in my last letter, is still here, although she intends ultimately taking up her abode in a convent situated some miles away. It is said that she knows nothing of the Russian language, and is about to take lessons therein ; but I cannot answer for the truth of mere *on dits*. When expressing wonderment at the attested non-knowledge on her part of what I had deemed almost a matter of course, it was suggested that possibly at present she only comprehended Slavonic.

Oh, that nightly and hourly clanging of what it would seem, on first hearing them, were exquisitely inharmonious cymbals ! How well one grows accustomed to the sound at last. As soon as darkness now sets in I am instinctively all in readiness for the warning notes, it may be, however, sounded at a considerable distance, or from amidst a cluster of now leafless trees, telling the tale that the night-watchers of this *quartier* are all on the *qui vive*, duly at their posts, warning the inhabitants that if they would protect,

not only themselves, but their families and household goods from the attacks of robbers, of which class *en passant* there is no lack here, they must only take it upon themselves to see that all is properly secured attaching to their homesteads. Clash, clash ; ding, dong—at seven and eight, and so on throughout the long hours of night.





CHAPTER XII.

A NOBLE'S NAME'S-DAY.

MOSCOW, OCTOBER 14TH,—
2nd, Russian style, 1876.

Another name's-day yesterday.

How this nation fairly teems with such celebrations.

Another, too, the day before—another on the day preceding that—and now, to-day, a specially important one—that of the Lady Patroness of Moscow, the Blessed Virgin. And the story appended to to-day's commemoration—that when, in the reign of King John III., the Tartars in a large body sought to invade Moscow, and all the inhabitants were in a state of dire dismay thereat, dreading what the result might possibly be, the same Lady Patroness appeared in a vision in the middle of the night to His Majesty, promising him aid and victory. The Tartars

arrived upon the scene, according to threat, and were vanquished, in due accordance, as the Muscovites to this day firmly believe, with the prediction in question.

The spirit of patriotism, as also pride of country, evinced by these Russians, is at once a startling and marked feature in their character. It is, too, impossible to help admiring it, even if at times one is slightly overpowered thereby. They recount with pride unutterable, and with no signs of weariness, however protracted be the relation, how Tartar after Tartar has from time to time attempted to capture their ancient city and been repulsed—and how that they in turn have wrested from these old foes Astracan and Kasan. They discourse with radiant countenances upon the other many conquests, north, south, east, and west, of which they can only too truly boast—and then they talk of what they will do in the future. This is perhaps the most curious and amusing part of all. There certainly seems to be no limit whatever to the aspirations of some of the leading private individuals. What they have

achieved in the past from time to time, may they not just as easily accomplish in the future? Why not?

The exclamation indulged in by a noble, only two days ago, struck me forcibly. The spirit thereof certainly did not boast a large share of the virtue designated humility, or, be it added, any special want of self-confidence, but it also spoke volumes as regards the pervading spirit of the times—not of course that one hears such decided expression of national feeling more than once in a way. “Yes, and the whole of Europe will be ours one day, perhaps. I, for my part, shall not be in the least surprised,” were the pleasantly self-satisfied words referred to.

I wondered what other nations might have been tempted to exclaim, had they been then and there present and compelled to accord answer.

And then they go off at a tangent and dilate proudly upon the number of times that Moscow has been set fire to by its own inhabitants rather than that it should fall a prey to the enemy, French or otherwise.

“And if they come again I will myself help to re-enact the same scene,” I heard a Muscovitish lady vociferate last week with considerable vehemence.

That Moscow not only has been, but also ever will be impossible of successful invasion, seems the universal idea. Rich in recent history unquestionably, as also in triumphs—the holiest of all places in Russia most undoubtedly—where, if possible, the rich would ever bury their “dear dead”—it is also the one city in European Russia that is strictly Asiatic in aspect as well as feeling, and devoted to old rites, old superstitions, and traditions. Thoroughly Conservative in well-nigh every detail, and in many instances, as I can only too plainly see, looking down upon the modern “Petersburg,” the Muscovites regard the more northern city, not only as a strictly speaking European, but in many respects as almost a Western one.

I have heard this expression of feeling volunteered more than once, or even twice.

As I look from the window before which I write, they tell me that we are now gazing

out upon the very spot where Napoleon's army entered in 1812, flushed with supposed—nay, for the time veritable—triumph, and that this entire neighbourhood, now fairly covered with wooden houses of all shapes and sizes, was in those days nothing but one large forest.

Truly, this is going back into the past, and takes one on in thought, also, into the future. Napoleon the First, quietly asleep within the Kremlin Palace, and on awaking in the morning being told that the city around him was in flames, but that possibly—this in answer to his own query—he might yet be able to make his way through and escape all personal danger, is an incident attaching solely to the first-named period—what may attach itself to a future already unsurmised, it is quite impossible to say.

But to return to that which is exquisitely Conservative, and, as a matter of course, abided by faithfully by all members of the community—the due and fitting commemoration of names'-days. Yesterday's *fête* was, after all, at once the most exciting and most per-

fectly carried out that it has yet been my lot to witness, and I have been present at several—taken part in each.

A noble's name's-day, for such it was—this city teems with nobles, it may be added—and that of one of the most Conservative of nobles too. Only that to convey some adequate idea of the whole spirit of the thing, it is necessary somewhat to antedate.

The individual in question, descended from one of the oldest families, and as proud of his birth and lineage as of the fact that only fifteen short years ago his estate boasted the possession of slaves whom he might command at will, had built and reckoned upon the commemoration of the day in question much as an English curly-pated child anticipates with hot anxiety the return of his birthday—the return of which anniversary, by the way, counts for almost nothing in these regions, and is as often as not quite forgotten.

The anticipations indulged in, too, were more and more identical in each detail, as will presently be seen. Invitations for the evening of the important day were issued by

the noble in person, when a large party was expected, but neither his anticipations nor his desire for congratulation rested here.

As usual, he would fain keep open-house on the occasion, from morning till night, the table being spread meanwhile for all who chose to partake, and, previously, he specially mentioned to each friend verbally, that even if they met for conviviality's sake at the end of the day, he should quite expect visits of personal congratulation from each and all in question during the earlier part thereof. And what is more, many of the friends, although living at a considerable distance, and tolerably occupied, it may be presumed—not that it would in reality appear so—made it a point of honour to obey his behest.

Such a scene of coming and going from morning till night. Such an amount of congratulation also, and bowing, and polite, enthusiastic speeches.

The host awaited the arrival of his numerous friends with a show of actual *impatience*, and paced the entire suite of rooms,

not only beforehand, but also in the interims elapsing between their respective departures and arrivals, as if something was weighing heavily on his mind.

Gift upon gift arrived duly for his acceptance, which, when placed in his hands, he only seemed to regard as a rightful contribution on such an important occasion. A splendid chocolate cake—thoroughly Russian—such as I had never seen in any other country, and about the size of an ordinary English wedding cake; another ditto, and of the same size, only in this instance composed nearly entirely of preserved fruit and cream; and *bon-bons* of this kind and that—and such *bon-bons* as Russia only possesses. Even the servants, now “freed” and able to take their departure at any time after giving three days’ notice, did not fail to contribute their portion, and though it was an acknowledged fact in the household that they one and all pilfered from their master to an enormous extent, and that nothing was safe in the establishment as regarded them, unless placed religiously under the custody of lock and key,

they on the present occasion came also boldly and enthusiastically to the front, laying a tremendous-looking water melon, somewhere about two feet in circumference, and as a tribute on the part of one and all, triumphantly at his feet—herein, it will be surmised, I speak metaphorically.

For days' past each member of the household had been in a state of incessant excitement as regards preparations for the said *fête*, for there are certain dishes which must be placed upon the supper-table *coûte qui coûte*, and in this identical matter of "*coûte*"—why, it is simply enormous. There is the inevitable pasty—*perok*—without which the whole affair would be thoroughly incomplete, and which requires infinite preparation, filled with rice and the intestines of one of their rarest fishes—*assitrina*—marvellously expensive, and found only in a very few of the Russian rivers. The dish in question is esteemed a rare delicacy here. I only wish that I could, with a fair amount of sincerity, endorse the sentiment.

Throughout the entire course of the day

the stream of people continued to invade the premises, when chocolate, tea, coffee and wine were served, according to choice.

The ladies are expected never to make their appearance in black, such colour, if one may thus designate it, being deemed not only highly uncomplimentary, but highly unpromptious. Even black silk is therefore as a rule discarded on the occasion, although some brave the wearing of it, and also do not hesitate to receive their guests thus equipped.

Strict mourning "wear"—popularly so called—is, I have been told, never adopted by any of the lower classes; not even on behalf of the loss of near relatives.

Oh, what an amount of marching about—what a buzz of talking, Russian and French being equally indulged in. Smoking was of course tolerably universal as regarded both ladies and gentlemen, some of whom remained throughout the entire course of the day.

At eight o'clock p.m., the invited guests began to arrive, most of them for the second time that day, each having probably, since their first visit in the morning, paid a dozen

others meanwhile, more or less, upon other friends boasting the same Christian name—only, however, *en passant*, to find in many instances such domiciles apparently closed against their entrance, or the expected host or hostess declared as “Not at home,” seeing that the expense of such open-house entertainment is not particularly light.

Then again came “tea”—in many cases supplied at the price of twenty shillings a pound—served in tumblers, tenanting low silver goblets with handles, to the gentlemen—in cups to the ladies—flavoured with lemon, which addition is, by the way, in my own humble estimation, highly agreeable. Rusks—again all sorts of delicious fancy-cakes—and then followed cards—whist and “*préférence*,” the latter being a decidedly popular game.

But, in the matter of popularity, cards seem the main evening amusement in these regions, and the whist table is frequently stuck by until the hours of night are more than spent. The game is played somewhat differently to our English “whist,” five or

even six people often joining in it, the two supernumeraries, as it were, standing by and taking their turn at intervals. They also cry "*passee*," if deeming that their "hand" does not justify them in taking the "lead," and chalk the number of tricks taken, etc., upon the green baize table before them instead of adopting "markers" of any description. And another difference in the game—scarcely perhaps worthy of note, but still a patent one to any possible looker-on who has been an *habitué* of any of our London clubs—that whist is here no longer whist in the true sense of the word—that talking is permitted to any extent; not deemed at any rate inconsistent with the rules of the game.

At midnight a hot supper was served—these Muscovites delight in hot suppers, by the way—a fine turkey, duly, of course, severed limb from limb ere being brought upon the scene, and costing exactly half-a-crown, being placed at the head of the table. Champagne flowed abundantly. Every one present was expected to partake of the *perok*, and—as everywhere else in these parts, on all

occasions—the hospitality shown was unbounded. Small salted or pickled cucumbers ever form part of every meal, with the exception of the evening “tea.” Also, nearly as frequently, mushrooms, pickled if in winter, with preserves of the richest description, and black bread.

Well on into the hours of night, the champagne having fully run its course, the enthusiastic and still loudly talking party separated, the guests taking their departure simultaneously and with one accord. This, however, not before having each duly quitted his or her seat, and found their way respectively first towards the hostess, whose hand they either kissed or pressed lightly, at the same time tendering their acknowledgments for the repast just served, the lady visitors completing the stroke of etiquette by kissing her forehead. And then comes move number two, made this time in the direction of the host himself, still waiting, like patience on a monument, at the foot of the table, whom they also thank, and with whom also they shake hands.

And then everybody envelops himself in his fur cloak, hails the first *eezvostchik* whom he can spy in the darkness, and sets himself at once to haggle with the sleepy driver as regards the price to be given. The guest, however anxious to reach home, abides strictly by the inevitable rule, well-nigh as incontrovertible as that of the Medes and Persians—"beats down" his *vis-à-vis*, clad in the never-diversified blue coat with pink striped sash ; and the rapacious *eezvostchik*, fully cognisant of the fact that no acknowledged tariff exists, and that he may exact, if not obtain at that hour of the night, whatever sum he likes, fearlessly faces the hirer, and demands what price he pleases. So much again for the questionable "advantage" of having a non-tariff system.

The noble again paced his rooms delightedly. He had, in true Conservative fashion, as he considered it, abided by the customs of his forefathers—kept open-house, no matter at what expense, and done due honour to his patron saint, thereby meaning, as it would rather seem, due honour to himself.

On one point simply do I unquestionably congratulate myself—that my own Christian name does not even cast its shadow upon the Russian calendar. Fortunately it is unique, and I am therefore exempted from what I should certainly deem it, the penalty else attaching.

But in the matter of keeping open-house, it seems the rule to do so here at all times. I am told that it is simply a custom, that, come who may, at any hour, all are welcome and expected to share whatever is in the house. The table is spread, and visitors sit down thereat as a matter of course, and, moreover, help themselves to all that is “going” without even being asked to do so. It is an easy mode of dispensing the courtesies of one’s own table at any rate. And the reason alleged for this prodigious amount of hospitality—that the enactment of the same is in accordance with their oldest traditions, and that—more excellent reason, far, I am tempted to exclaim—provisions of every kind are marvellously cheap. In St. Petersburg, for instance, a man possessing even a mode-

rate income must not only be content to “draw in his horns,” and live simply, but he must likewise retrench his hospitalities within the narrowest bounds. Entertainment there costs considerably more, and must be curtailed accordingly. In Moscow it is possible to live well-nigh after the fashion of an old feudal lord in whose time “vassal and retainer” found ever hearty welcome at “the board;” and to do all this, moreover, upon terms which elsewhere would be deemed anything but those appertaining to the dignity of nobility.





CHAPTER XIII.

GLIMPSES AT DOMESTIC LIFE—MODE OF ADDRESS—
A NEARLY FORGOTTEN SURNAME—ROMANCE DEALT
IN LARGELY—WON BY A “FLUKE”—THE FORCE
OF EXAMPLE—“SMALL” PARTY BELOW STAIRS
—GLANCING UPWARDS THROUGH A FOG.

MOSCOW, OCTOBER 18TH—

6th, Russian style (1876).

DOMESTIC life here, as also social, is as thoroughly different to aught English as can well be imagined. It would almost seem, in fact, when regarding the two states or conditions from a simply unprejudiced point of view, that there is well-nigh nothing in common between them, that the ordinary rules applicable to one form no part whatever of the *régime* prescribed by the other. What would be deemed in the Western world a clear breach of etiquette and good manners, is in many instances considered not only admissible but desirable here, and as regards

other points which we in old England would not forego on any account, the Muscovites would in their turn think it a rare breach of the laws affecting courtesy to adopt.

And this wide difference in the mode of exchanging what are considered the amenities of life extends from the noble's spacious *salon de reception* to the conduct of those occupying the lowest ranks of life. The very mode, to begin with, which is ever prevalent in these parts, of addressing one's neighbours, friends, and acquaintances, is utterly at variance, I imagine, with that adopted in any other country. The family-name is well-nigh merged, as it would seem—becomes at any rate a matter, apparently, of mere insignificance. You behold it engraved, or it may be only written, on a diminutive brass-plate for instance, nailed on to the outer entrance of this or that establishment, and the said name probably takes its place prominently in all family deeds, etc., but in all matters of personal address it is altogether withheld. You—by which I mean either native or foreigner, it matters

not which—preserve your own identity, it is true, but only to a certain extent. The Christian name is retained in all its significance, but to it is appended—affixed rather—the Christian name of your father.

And herein you are addressed in what they deem the most courteous and respectful manner possible—superiors, equals, and inferiors—even servants—all adopting the same course. Thus Mary, the ever-popular name, is no longer “Mary” *solus*, but considerably lengthened, perhaps to *Mari-neekalevna*, the lady’s father having rejoiced in the name of Nicholas, which is thus inevitably perpetuated, whether he likes it or not; and Anna, a favourite name here amongst all classes, is followed, it may be by *Eeakovlemna*—James—or it is impossible to say what other adjunct. Thus the father’s Christian name—under such circumstances presumably becoming well-nigh a patronymic to all intents and purposes—is never merged or lost sight of.

At first it strikes a stranger’s ear as being wonderfully wanting both in propriety and

respect when relatives, friends, acquaintances, and the lowest menials all adopt the same uniform mode of address, but one soon grows accustomed to this, as to everything else. Had it not been for memory coming occasionally to the rescue, my own surname might have been a thing utterly forgotten by me ever since I crossed the frontier. So much for custom. And what matters it into the bargain ?

The contrast, too, between English and Russian servants is as marked as that between black and white, only that perhaps herein I am treading on ground which partakes unduly of domesticity. However—I have plunged into the Rubicon. Why draw back ?

Never were two races, presumably, less adapted for comparison—I refer, of course, to the class specially named. Never did human nature, intricate as it ever is, possess a more curious and at once difficult to be understood complication of vices and virtues, so to speak.

The present—I speak now of the Russian—domestic servant offers a study which I

cannot help thinking would perplex the philosophic powers of any Solon. Only fifteen years ago—if not now quite young, of course—mere slaves on the estate of this owner and that, it is a fact scarcely to be wondered at that their manner towards their superiors is for the most part servile in the extreme. They have acquired the manner in question, inherited it from their forefathers, and therefore it will ever be theirs, whether meanwhile they are serving you faithfully, or cheating you in every instance to the very best of their capability, making your life a perfect torment, not only to yourself but all concerned.

I cannot, of course, boast personal household experience here, such experience not lying within the reach of travellers and wanderers like myself, but I can nevertheless speak absolutely and with a considerable share of knowledge on this self-same point, for the personal experience of every *maitresse de ménage* seems to correspond pretty accurately, with occasional exceptions. Having heard the evidence of one, whether the

perturbed discourser be Russian born and bred, Russian only by marriage and therefore adoption of country, or belonging out and out to any other nation under the face of the sun, you have to all intents and purposes heard the evidence of all. The tale only runs through one edition, admittedly, but that edition is a lengthy one, being never-ending.

Some months ago it fell to my lot to meet with for the first time, although long ere this a well-worn volume, the Brothers Mayhew's "Plague of my Life," known previously doubtless to all English readers save myself. If the work in question be a fit and truthful exponent, as it purports to be, and as I admit it is, of many phases of domestic life at home as regards its trials, both of temper and patience, it constitutes, however involuntarily, also an exponent, although not one hundredth part adequately rendered, of Muscovitish perplexities and daily aggravations offered on the part of those admittedly essential members of society—one's cook and *femme de chambre*.

Had the same facetious and capitally de-

scriptive writers only been induced to extend their investigations eastward—ah, what an admirable field would they have found on which to exercise their mental energy. They contented themselves, however, with what came within the grasp of their own knowledge—*et cela suffit*. The once slave—now servant here—is, to begin with, frequently a veritable “guy” in aspect.

Oh, for the pencil of a Leech, as I have ventured once before, to depict truly. She—for it is, as grammarians have it, and acknowledging the quotation, “of the less worthy gender” that I now speak—dispenses her services in your establishment with a huge checked handkerchief, or in winter a heavy woollen shawl, bound tightly round her head and enveloping her shoulders. Her dress—or it may be only *jupon* and greasy jacket—makes one flinch from the idea of her answering to the name of cook, to say nothing of her legs being ordinarily stockingless, and also frequently bootless. She has quitted the country for the express purpose of hiring herself for town-service, and it requires consider-

able share of resolution on her part to abandon an old prejudice, attaching at any rate to the summer season, and go otherwise than barefooted. And when they do wear boots—their marvellous thickness !

The colour of the Abigail's face, too—arms and hands, also—is not propitious. The idea at once suggests itself that since last Saturday evening—the grand evening of the week, by the way, in these regions, when every peasant in the locality, in which class is to be included not only labourers and servants, but tradespeople of every description—she has not specially troubled herself either as regards the use of soap or water. Her hair, too, is perhaps sagaciously hidden from view, thanks to the already alluded to woollen covering.

And mentally. Type number one is utterly false ; clever and at once deceitful to a nicety, striving hard at every point—and frequently with success—to become “master of the entire situation.” She is as a rule given to habits of intoxication, is inevitably dishonest—such failing being at once con-

stitutional—and is in strict league with both butcher and baker, with an intelligent view to the filling of her own pocket. A sorry picture truly, but, with some happy exceptions, the generally presented one. Never has it been my lot to listen to such recitals of gratuitous story-telling—otherwise pure invention. A romancer, in fact, might deem himself more than happy did he only possess half the amount of faculty for same in which they so ruthlessly indulge. Anything rather than the truth with most of them, moral courage being distressfully at a discount.

An exceptionally satisfactory attendant has perhaps fallen to your lot—this to your infinite astonishment—and you duly prize her. She kisses, on the shortest possible notice, your hands, shoulders, and it may be even feet, whenever seized with the impulse to do so, professes infinite devotion to you, as also firm resolution to die in your service. *Que faire?* You accept the devotion offered, wonderingly—and also, for once, believe in the declared resolution.

But wait a while. Your trusty and reliable

aide-de-camp approaches you one day in deepest sorrow—plunged in grief. She has that instant received a letter from her father, living, of course, “many miles distant in the country,” apprising her of the fact that he is dangerously ill, and that she must start off at once if she would wish to see him alive. What is to be done? Can you possibly dispense with her services for at least three or four days? falls petitioningly from her lips. How heartily she will bless you if you can. She shows you the letter which has just come to hand, duly stamped, and begs you to read it, if only that you may see—this with no inconsiderable degree of pride—what a good “hand” somebody or other writes at home. You duly peruse the document, and feel adequately sorry. Yes, she must go at once. Not a moment is to be lost. Whereupon she again, weepingly, kisses your hands, and vows solemnly—using a sacred name which I will not permit myself to employ here, but which seems ever on their lips for a like purpose—that on her return to your service she will work yet more devotedly.

Inwardly you wish that your treasure was only back again: that those "few days" were ended.

Your only reliable *employé*.

There is, however, other fiction in the world, ay, and that clever fiction too, besides that which finds its way into print. Witness the *finale*, for I have sketched from life—not trenched in the least upon imagination. It is simply not necessary to do so, the above characteristic details—how many times carried into practice—having happened beneath my own eye only last week.

A couple of days, not more, served fully to develop the plot, which I recommend as a not altogether bootless sample to the notice of dramatists. The faithful *devouée* had not torn herself quite so far away from the old threshold as had been fondly imagined. She had been prompted, by no one knows what, to enter the service of some one else living close by, and had not possessed the moral courage requisite—or at least so it seemed—to make a clean breast of it. Circumlocution is dear to the hearts of many—to those

even who are not located in the "circumlocution office"—and in this instance the characteristic in point had been done full justice to. No necessary detail had been unattended to. The pathetic letter had, as it was afterwards found, been penned at express request by the owner of the general provision shop close at hand, doubtless well accustomed to the execution of such duties; and her *passeport*—the only hold which a master or mistress now has upon those in their "employ," and without which it is impossible to obtain a fresh situation—had, by a clever fluke, been placed entirely out of the reach of mistress number one. The plot had been carefully studied, and what was more, she had wisely spared herself the pain (?) of saying adieu. The *dvornik* in the establishment next door played precisely the same game only two days afterwards, in equally tragic fashion. His *paterfamilias*, also living in "the country," and to whom he was "devotedly attached," was alike seized with sudden illness, and required by written letter the immediate presence of his son, if

not heir. Again the document presented bore ample evidence as to the validity of the story, as did also our dvornik's tears and lamentations.

But again a gross case of deception and duplicity is unveiled ; not one word either of recital number two is true, the self-constituted hero of the same also merely wishing, *à la* Joe, to "move on." As to the question of morality as regards class referred to, it is one upon which I well-nigh hesitate to speak. Most of the servants—married or unmarried, it seems to matter little here—presenting themselves for hire, and their name certainly appears to be legion, are already fairly endowed with children, and the conditions generally tendered are that such children accompany them wherever they go. No choice simply lies before the bewildered *bahreenya* or lady hiring. She must either agree to take the parties one and all, as required, or run a risk of having to do altogether without domestic aid, which in these regions is a matter of the gravest impossibility.

One mode of escape, however, lies before

her. For double the amount of wages proposed, or thereabouts, the cook, to wit, will perhaps waive the point at issue, and disperse her "young hopefuls" elsewhere. But herein is achieved a considerable stroke of policy—the *bahreenya* may or may not have means wherewith to meet the demand—on which point hinges all.

I have, from motives of sheer curiosity, entered many of these Russian kitchens, offering a sudden and unlooked-for contrast to the state of things existing in the spacious reception saloons upstairs. The domestics, each follow their different tasks under circumstances which in England would be deemed exquisitely difficult, with a bare-legged, tiny urchin trotting about here, another, it may be, there, or it may be nestled on a dingy-looking bed in the corner. Only, I say, so much for habit in this world. In a western kitchen, for instance—one of course belonging to the class described—such a state of things could not meet with even toleration. Here, as far as I can see, it is an admitted part of the whole system.

And such dainty cooking, too, as is effected by “*materfamilias*” in the midst of what must unquestionably be difficult surroundings. Such delicately flavoured dishes.

But of their own food in particular—a prescribed *régime* which is utterly distinct in character from that indulged in by those for whom they toil—of their mode of eating also, which is exquisitely unique—and also of their virtues, for they have them, more in my next—this Russian serving-class proving quite a study. The mind has passed from such as it was in a state of dreary serfdom, to a second stage—that of freedom; but still it is only partially developed, and the development in question presents itself in singular and at once incongruous fashion. The mental powers have taken a turn in an upward direction—do not still lie dormant; but as they extend themselves their grasp is often and necessarily blindfolded—their growth at times a stunted one.



CHAPTER XIV.

FROST AND "PAITCHKIES"—FLIES TO THE LAST—
AN ADVENTURE AND A RESCUE—EEZVOSTCHIKS
A RULING POWER—PLAGUE AMONGST THE
TURKISH TROOPS—THE ENGLISH CHURCH—A
MUSICAL SOIRÉE—LOVE OF ENGLISH LITERA-
TURE—ADVANCEMENT AND AMBITION—DISTINC-
TION BETWEEN THE CLASSES.

MOSCOW, OCTOBER 23RD—

11th Russian style, 1876.

HERE we are, then, in the midst of frost and ice, and no mistake. Winter has thoroughly set in. The ponds are completely frozen over, although not sufficiently so to "bear;" and the icicles hang heavily and fantastically from outside the windows. The men of all classes are duly equipped against the snow from top to toe, as if anxious to exemplify the proverb, that being forewarned is also being forearmed; and no woman dares to venture out of doors without previously

enveloping her head in the becoming *bashlik*, or thoroughly protecting shawl. I could never have imagined such cold, there being as yet no snow, had I not personally experienced it—and involuntarily I remind myself that this is, after all, only the beginning of the end, so to speak.

These *paitchkies*, or stoves, are all very well in their way—at first, in fact, I was not a little impressed in their favour—but on a further acquaintance one is considerably disposed to adopt a different mode of thinking. They are not to be compared for an instant, when the comparison is brought to bear practically, with an open English fireplace, of which luxury, by the way, it is becoming the aim of some of the Muscovites to avail themselves—this when expense permits. No smoke, admittedly—also no dust—but by way of compensation for the same a woeful want of appearance of fire; and depend upon it that in this life appearance, however unwholesome and unsound be the doctrine inculcated in its general aspect, is after all half the battle. You come in rather more

than half frozen from the outer world, discard your fur surroundings which well-nigh serve to suffocate you when worn within doors, and then, as a matter of course, instinctively direct your glance in quest of a bright picture-like blaze. But you glance in vain. Your vision only meets the frontage of a dead wall. Fire has been within it, so to speak, and also recently, you are told, and the wall in question is still hot, should you be disposed to feel it, but there will be no more fire there again that day, and you have the melancholy satisfaction of knowing that all within is, if hot, at any rate now black as midnight.

And yet, strangest part of all, flies still beset us to an absolutely unbearable extent. The marvel is that they have not long since been chased away by the change in temperature. But no; here they are, true to the last, promising it would seem to favour us with their presence during the entire winter. The sting inflicted—I speak feelingly—by the specimens in these regions is, *en passant*, curiously painful, and serves to make one

start even as the small animal inserts its miniature proboscis into the flesh of its victim. Even at night, after the candle is extinguished, their presence proves a veritable nuisance, and they rouse one even from sleep without evincing the smallest signs of remorse. If a small evil, they at any rate constitute a pertinacious and resolute one.

One item relative to the average state of the Moscow streets, showing that at least I have not exaggerated matters in my former description. It will at any rate prove to those who read that there is wondrous room for improvement, as in how many other respects in these regions, and that wandering about after darkness has set in, under the sole charge of these *eezvostchiks*, is not the most agreeable business in the world, however independent be such a course of action.

One member of our party—a lady—returning home between six and seven o'clock one evening last week, as a matter of course, seeing that every one avoids pedestrianising here, hailed an *eezvostchik*. She knew that it was a somewhat risky affair even venturing

to return thus—that it is ordinarily against the law of the Medes and Persians—otherwise higher class of Muscovites—for ladies to travel about thus unescorted after daylight has entirely waned. *Mais*, under the circumstances, *que faire?* What else was left for her to do? Only that she had good reason to repent her nevertheless necessary escapade. On they drove for awhile, along wretchedly boggy streets; first jolting in one direction, then in another, until the wonder was that both driver and occupant were not overturned mercilessly into the surrounding mud and water.

But they had at last evidently come to a place called “stop.” The luckless horse was already up to its knees in water—quagmire rather—and could not move onwards a single inch—neither evidently could it turn round and retrace its steps.

“Where on earth are you going?” screamed the hoarse voices of several men, apparently standing somewhere on the opposite side of the roadway.

“Don’t know,” exclaimed the bewildered

eezvostchik, if curtly, at any rate for once truthfully.

"You'll be drowned, then, to a certainty," came again, "if you don't take care what you are about."

"Drowned in the very streets of Moscow!" mentally ejaculated the victim of this certainly awkward manoeuvre. The *eezvostchik*, again honest as far as intention went, but otherwise marvellously dense in intellect, having, as it afterwards appeared, only just come up from "the country," saw "no help for it," as the saying is, and glanced about him in the darkness in bewildered fashion. The gas lamps in the streets and roadways, when they do exist at all, are only few and far between, at rare distances the one from the other. The Muscovitish lady possessed somewhat more self-command than her charioteer.

"Help!" she exclaimed. "Tell us at least where to go."

"Go back, then, instantly," came again from the gruff voices across the road, which act could not, however, possibly be effected,

for the wheels were, as a matter of course, already more than half embedded in the mud.

Only that the unfortunate victim of the countryman's stupidity scarcely saw the gist of perishing thus ignobly, a large sum was offered on the spur of the instant to the first looker-on who would consent to lend a helping hand, but none seemed disposed to risk their services.

"One course only remains, then," again exclaimed the lady bravely. "You must carry me instantly to some safe landing-place."

In another five minutes the Spartan occupant stood breathlessly on *terra firma*. But the risk she had run can only adequately be imagined by those knowing something of the class of men generally constituting themselves as *eezvostchiks*. Ordinarily an ill-conditioned, impertinent, and only too often, inebriated set, the marvel simply is that she had fallen into such reliable hands, to say nothing of the fact that a small boy, as is only too frequently the case, was not her charioteer on the present occasion. It might have been so.

Numerous are the tales told of the many tricks and devices in which these very essential members of society in Russia are wont to indulge. They are certainly "lords of the creation" here in one sense of the term, for knowing well their own value, that their vehicles, however numerous, are not-to-be-done-without comforts as regards the entire mass of the community, they do not fail when occasion serves to ride the high horse and assert their dignity.

I look upon these men as literally a ruling power in this territory, however humble be their condition, however numerous, as also increasing, their class. How will it be a short time hence I marvel, when these thousands of vehicles will be for months and months housed, and when sledges, by also thousands as I am told, will have taken their places? To be frank, I am somewhat curious in the matter, seeing that the ground is novel to me.

There was a report yesterday, circulated in some of the Russian papers, that a species of plague had broken out among the Turkish troops. A shudder ran through the party

wherein I first heard it named. The reason is obvious, setting aside the common charity which would fain see even enemies spared from such a dire affliction. What if the plague referred to should spread, ay, and spread widely, too, not only on that side of the camp, but this!

The chaplain attached to the nice English church here alluded two or three Sundays ago most feelingly and sensibly to the state of bitter warfare now existing. He called attention to the immense amount of suffering on either side, and craved the monetary assistance of all those constituting his congregation on behalf of the sick and wounded.

Nowhere in foreign lands, I venture to say, can a more earnest and hearty congregation be found than in the one English church of which Moscow boasts. The singing and chanting are both exceptionally good, and all is done that can possibly make the service attractive. The hymnal in vogue is that designated "Ancient and Modern," and the chaplain preaches well and cleverly. To be frank, I felt more at home there than has

been the case anywhere else in Moscow, when hearing the same hymn that I had listened to only a few months' previously in a thronged and favourite London church. So much for association. The congregation has hitherto been but small, out of the more than five hundred English tenanting Moscow, but I am told that, during the course of the present month, the many absentees all return like a flock of sheep from their country-houses—this in true English fashion—and that then the church, holding about two hundred, is crowded.

The organ is well and tastefully played. But relative to music. Whenever indulged in here it is of the very best. Again no half measures are deemed permissible, as I have before observed in reference to other matters. Those who cannot play or sing, not only well, as ordinarily deemed, but in admirable fashion, decline forthwith and decisively to undertake the task of entertaining you, and leave the field open to their more accomplished *confrères*. Thus one never listens to bad music, or even to what is indifferent.

The standard is high; only some succeed in reaching it, but all members of the higher class, whether performers or not, abide by such standard faithfully, and are amply satisfied on hearing *viva voce* that this individual and that "neither sings nor plays." No second petition follows. The answer is definitive. *Cela va sans dire*. The individual in question does not excel, and, therefore, does not indulge in any musical adventure for your special benefit.

A private musical *soirée*, two evenings ago, at which I had the good fortune to be present, delighted me beyond measure. The pianoforte music—classical, and performed entirely by ladies—could only have been achieved after prodigious study. Rubenstein and Mendelssohn were the two masters whose *chef-d'œuvres* were mainly revelled in; Strauss, however, was not forgotten, and the entire entertainment was diversified with charming Bohemian songs and choruses, rendered in wild, gipsy-like fashion by several members of the group standing round.

Even the children of the party joined in the

trebles with the greatest self-composure imaginable. Some of the younger members of the party spoke English, French, and German, in addition of course to their own language, with apparently equal ease, although, as they themselves told me, they had not "talked with any one from England" for nearly twelve years—since, indeed, the English *professeur* had last "spoken with them." So much for aptitude of memory, and also facility of comprehension. They had, they said, read all Shakespeare's works in the vulgar tongue, so to speak—also those of Walter Scott and Charles Dickens, in the latter of whom they much delighted. "In fact," as one specially agreeable and intellectual member of the party observed, "we read everything English that comes in our way." This item I note specially, proving as it does the rapid march as regards education and general culture being made by the higher classes. They aim at much unquestionably, also possess exceptional powers of grasping mentally, and are ambitious in *the matter* of excelling in everything.

And this self-same ambition—to what may it not ultimately lead?—this merely thrown out *en passant* as a suggestion. It has led them assuredly towards the accomplishment of no little in the past—it is, as I feel convinced, the ruling passion here with the majority. Speak to a Russian, belonging to the class in question of course, touching his children, who are already in their very nurseries chattering this language and that, as if they had been born, as they unquestionably are, linguists—ask him what plan he marks out for them. As regards head culture—it is solely *àpropos* of such culture that I am now speaking—he significantly impresses upon you the fact—this with an emphatic gesture—that his children will not at least find it difficult to accomplish all that the present generation of Russians has achieved, and, doubtless, he would fain add, they will achieve infinitely more. He fully recognises the incontrovertible fact that there is absolutely no such thing as standing still in this life, that progress or retrogression are the two only alternatives, and has moreover

adopted it as his own particular theory that the former is the only available one. This special characteristic is perceptible at well-nigh all points of the compass. Now that he has once gone ahead—now that he has once broken loose as it were in the matter of civilization, permitted, however reluctantly on the part of some, the bonds of serfdom to be broken up for aye, and freedom to be indulged in by all—now I say that he has achieved all this, he is ever on the *qui vive* to perpetuate that which has not only begun but which has taken such deep root. But this only anent the patrician, or noble class ; as distinct yet from the lower orders as night is from day. Distinct in almost every detail—even it may be said as regards the simple matter of language, seeing that French verbiage reigns supreme in all refined society—although, again, none ever venture to indulge in it who are not thoroughly masters thereof.

This, and in a variety of other instances, adaptation of what is French serves to strike an outsider at first sight as being hugely *unnatural*, uncomplimentary even to the national

tongue. But the habit, thanks to Court etiquette, has gained ground thoroughly. In fact, to visit Russia without being conversant with French would be nearly as disastrous to one's personal pleasure and at once interest in all that is going on around as would be ignorance of the vernacular itself, only that somehow it seems the wrong language in the wrong place, however much at fault may be the notion thus expressed.

Why not let each nation, when at home, so to speak, abide religiously by the tongue which is actually theirs? Why daily employ another which is at once foreign and utterly mystifying? Servant, tradesman—all the peasant class in fact—know but the vernacular—their masters, as also all those above them, adopt even on the most ordinary occasions a language of which these dependents and *employés* do not comprehend a single word. This circumstance must surely in itself be somewhat too distinctive, as also conduce considerably towards lessening the amount of personal interest which, fundamentally speaking, lies ever at the root of all

complete progression and advancement. The peasant must naturally feel himself apart. True; the day has at last come when he—the recent serf—is being educated also, and no less than three different household servants whom I have questioned during my sojourn in these far-away climes, have owned, and that too with a considerable share of pride, that they could not only read, but write. But they have proved the—shall I word it happy?—exception to the rule—and then, *en parenthèse*, both the reading and writing in each case were, confessedly, mediocre. Still, however, the power named was theirs, and a straw ever serves to show which way the wind blows. The amount of pride even evinced by each member of the trio referred to, the confession having been volunteered, showed tolerably clearly how exceptional was the circumstance in point. Schools, however, are now being formed for all classes of the community; and what is more, and of infinitely higher importance to boot, no *professeurs*, whether masters or mistresses, are permitted in any quarter to enter upon the task of education unless

they are duly qualified and have taken out a regular diploma. A Russian governess is, I believe, at the best badly paid ; but this rule does not hold good as regards foreigners.

The Bulgarian lady—princess it was at first said—who chose this city as a sort of resting-place from the storm of cruelty which she had experienced in her own land at the hands of the Turks, is still quartered here—thanks to the efforts of the Slavonic Committee, who are still daily busily at work, assisting the sufferers and refugees to the best of their ability. The Bulgarian refugee in question, in reference to whom so much has been said, as also thought here, is now busily engaged in writing what purports to be her own life—to be issued—when, and with what view, remains to be seen.





CHAPTER XV.

A RUSSIAN VETERAN.

MOSCOW, OCTOBER 28TH—

16th, Russian style, 1876.

RUSSIA, as is already perhaps known to those at home, has within the course of the present month sustained a heavy loss in the death of one of her oldest Admirals—Constantine Istomin—a name possessing interest for Englishmen, if only from the fact that in early life, as midshipman, he took part with them in the defence of Christianity against the Turks—the supreme direction of the Russian, English, and French fleets on that occasion being placed under the command of Rear-Admiral Codrington.

The gallant Admiral—one of the few surviving heroes of Navarino, Naval President of the High Court of Justice, and Admiral of the White Flag—expired at his residence in *St. Petersburg*, on the 2nd instant, at nine



Vincent Brooks, lith.

PEASANT GIRL OF KOPRINA,
IN THE ENVIRONS OF ST PETERSBURGH.



o'clock p.m., after having served his country as an officer for more than fifty-two years, distinguishing himself meanwhile by a display of those qualities and salient points of character specially to be recognised in the staunch disciples of the celebrated founder of the Black Sea fleet—Admiral Lazareff—under whose immediate direction, from the year 1825 until 1846, he passed his entire naval career.

Entering as midshipman on board the line-ship "Azoph," commanded by the same, he took part in the battle of Navarino, where, as I have already said, the Turkish fleet was completely overpowered by the united squadrons of Russia, England, and France.

As the result of this victory Istomin was presented with the sword of honour, and appointed first lieutenant on board the corvette "Navarino," taken in this battle from the enemy. The captain nominated to the command of the ship in question had originally held the post of first lieutenant in connection with the "Azoph," and was the same Nahemoff who several years later on—

in 1853—distinguished himself as the destroyer of the Turkish fleet at Synope and also defender of Sebastopol.

On board this corvette the late Admiral returned to Russia in 1830, and two years subsequently, when Lazareff was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea fleet, he took Istomin with him as *aide-de-camp*. In this capacity he remained until the year 1846, possessing throughout the period named the entire confidence of his chief, and commanding meanwhile from time to time the schooner "Forerunner," sloop "Oreste," frigate "Flora," line-ship "Sviatosloff," and steam frigate "Bessarabia"—on board the latter of which he frequently navigated in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, often taking part in the expeditions undertaken by both Russian army and fleet against the rebellious Circassians tenanted the western portion of the Caucasus. In 1841, when already promoted as post-captain, Istomin received orders to start for England with a view to the construction of steamers for the Black Sea fleet. He remained there three years, and the result

of this prolonged sojourn in a foreign land was the ultimate construction of the steamers "Bessarabia," "Crimea," "Odessa," "Thunderer," and "Chersoness." The long and effectual service rendered by these steamers proved to the fleet in question that Istomin's activity, as also mental energy, had not been relied upon in vain.

In 1844 he again returned to Russia, and the following year started for the Mediterranean, as captain of the said "Bessarabia," with the view of joining the Emperor Nicholas, who, accompanied by the other members of the Imperial family, was then wintering in Italy. The Emperor, duly appreciating his merits, created him *aide-de-camp*; and from that date until the year 1853 Istomin remained personally attached to His Majesty, executing the various commissions which Royalty chose to impose upon him, whether of naval, military, judicial, or diplomatic character.

The same year saw him promoted to the rank of Rear-Admiral, still, however, preserving the dignity attaching as *aide-de-camp*

to the Emperor. During the war breaking out in the same year, and extending over that succeeding it, he occupied an important post in the fleet—the first year that of chief of Admiral Riccord's staff, who commanded in the Baltic, and that following a like post under the Great Admiral, the Grand Duke Constantine, who succeeded Riccord as Commander.

In 1858 the Rear-Admiral was appointed Commander of the naval Russian forces in the Mediterranean, and on his return with his squadron in 1859 he was further appointed as Governor of the Port of Archangel. The year 1862 saw him advanced to the rank of Vice-Admiral, and installed as member of the College of the Admiralty, a rank in English *parlance* corresponding to that of Lord of the Admiralty.

Dating from this period Istomin occupied himself mainly with naval legislative work. In 1869 he attained the rank of Full Admiral, and six years later on was called upon to occupy the post of Naval President of the High Court of Justice, which post he occupied

up to the day of his death. During the course of his career he had been decorated with well-nigh all the first-class orders of the Empire, besides being knight of many foreign orders. With Istomin's death one more link has been broken in that chain uniting the present with the memorable past of the Black Sea fleet. A grateful country, it is to be hoped, will not in its memoirs forget those of its sons who, as in the present instance, have sacrificed their lives to its service.

It is not superfluous to add that the late hero was the eldest of five brothers, the second of whom, Andrew, was drowned on the occasion of the wreck of the "Ingermanland," being first lieutenant on board. The third brother, Rear-Admiral Vladimir Istomin, met his fate at Sebastopol on the celebrated heights of the Malakoff, which was under his command, his head being blown off by a shell. A fourth brother, Alexander, was drowned during a storm on board a man-of-war, when serving as midshipman; and the fifth brother, Vice-Admiral Paul, has resigned, after having also served in the navy

for the space of forty years. The deceased veteran leaves a widow and ten children—four daughters and six sons—the eldest of whom, Serge, lieutenant in the navy, is married to an English lady.





CHAPTER XVI.

A TWO MONTHS' ARMISTICE—RUIN IN THE
TRAIN—ESTATES UNSALEABLE—THE AUSTRIAN
CONSUL AGGRIEVED—RUSSIAN DITTO IN A
“FIX”—ENGLISH DITTO “WALKS SAFELY”
—TABLEAU BEFORE THE GATES OF THE
KREMLIN—THE HOLY PICTURE—BELL OF IVAN
VELIKI—AND AN IMPERIAL ADDRESS.

MOSCOW, NOVEMBER 10TH.

October 29th, Russian style, 1876.

THE news that a two months' armistice had at last been effected between the belligerents was received here with considerable excitement, and met with only a mixed amount of satisfaction. Some were heard to aver that it would have been infinitely better to have fought the matter out at once, and brought affairs to a speedy conclusion either one way or the other. Others declared that, in the present state of things—the Russians not knowing whether war actually lies before

them or not—their position is a highly critical one, not only as regards trade and the prospects of commerce in general, but also—important item in these regions, where land is extensive, and estates therefore exist by legion—in the matter of buying and selling landed property. Much of the last-named item is, as a matter of course, already in the market, and there the chances are it will remain—especially those estates lying in the far south—until some amicable solution is arrived at.

Very little paper money is even to be obtained, and financial affairs are reported as in a most disastrous state.

The report that the Austrian Consul had met with barbarous and fatal treatment at the hands of the Turks, as also that the Russian Consul had been compelled to seek safety in immediate flight from Constantinople, caused the most intense excitement in this old Muscovitish capital, such as will not soon be forgotten by those taking part therein. In reply to my query, tendered on the day in question, when the report first reached St.

Petersburg by telegraph, "And what about the English Consul?"—the answer was laconic, but expressive: "The English Consul! He is all right, of course. He still walks safely amidst the Turks as their best friend." I give the reply verbatim, merely with the view of showing the true and well-nigh universal state of feeling here. Considerable indignation has prevailed since the outbreak of the war at the fact that England has not chosen to lend aid to the Servians, the cause being professedly—I adopt the wording ever in vogue—one of Christianity; and on more than one occasion when finding myself taking part, however involuntarily, in a dense crowd, I have deemed it expedient to maintain silence, lest the tone of my western tongue should serve to announce a nationality which is not in special favour here. "Down with the English," and so forth, as I heard echoed and re-echoed the other day by peasant voices when witnessing volunteers starting by rail, as already described, for Servia, is somewhat startling wording—scarcely genial at any rate, to say the least of it.

Last Sunday, at another large meeting of the Slavonian Committee, the sum of 5,000 roubles was voted for Servian woes, this being a portion of the surplus in hand; and to-day the mobilization of Russian troops in the south begins. Only one train during the course of each day will, I am told, be at the disposal of ordinary passengers, and that the "Mail." The others starting hence will be occupied by troops.

The Emperor's visit to his ancient capital has been looked forward to with intense interest in the present instance by the citizens, who had set their hearts upon giving him a special reception.

A lapse of five months since he had visited the city—an unusually long space of time, I am told—and in the meanwhile how much has transpired, engrossing deep and public interest. The newspapers have cried out for war—the voice of the people thus making itself heard—but Russia has nevertheless not so far "declared" the same.

The tidings that His Imperial Majesty had *not* only decided upon passing through

Moscow on his return from the Crimea *en route* for St. Petersburg, but that he also intended spending several days here, were received with marked enthusiasm.

Last evening—the snow meanwhile standing thickly everywhere, for we have been enveloped in the dense white mass for now nearly a month—the Emperor and Empress, accompanied by the Czarevitch and Princess Dagmar, Prince Serge, Prince Paul, and the Chancellor—Prince Gortschakoff—each attended by their respective suites, arrived at the terminus of the Nicolaieff Railway, and at once proceeded in carriages to the Imperial Palace, standing loftily and conspicuously within the walls of the mighty Kremlin. But though nine o'clock p.m., the frost also being intense, one duty must not be omitted by each and every member of that royal *cortége* ere it had been many minutes within the holy city.

The various equipages and sledges of which the party consisted made rapid way through the whitely-robed streets, well adorned with gaily coloured flags—such adornments, however, only to be duly appreciated and ad-

mired by the light of day—and lightly and in pleasant fashion skimmed the slight ascent leading to the main and massive gateway giving entrance to that glorious “Kremlin-pile”—but all at once all came to a standstill. The Emperor and Empress alighted, and led the way towards the marvellously small but beautiful chapel, nooked immediately outside the gates, in which service is perpetually performed, and within which rests the holiest picture in all Moscow—that of its patron saint, the holy Madonna.

No one ever passes within these Kremlin gates, either for the purpose of ingress or egress, without making his way up between the two rows of nuns uniformly stationed on either side of the entrance, and bowing low, meanwhile crossing himself repeatedly before the revered picture. And the Emperor proves himself no exception to the general rule, his first visit on entering the ancient capital ever being to this chapel.

To-day, however, has witnessed the scene which has elicited the keen enthusiasm of every Muscovitish heart, and which it has

just been my own good fortune to take part in.

We started in sledges at eight o'clock a.m., and skimmed for an hour buoyantly and invigoratingly over and amidst that crisp and flaky carpet. An hour's drive—skating rather—and we in our turn had mounted the Kremlin hill, faced the mighty turreted wall, three miles in circumference, and passed within.

Never have I beheld such a sight in all my wanderings—never, the probability is, shall I behold such another. The several massive cathedrals, each considerably apart from the other, stood out resplendently against the bright blue sky—forming an inimitable background—each with their many and monster gilded domes more than sparsely decked here and there with the soft, feathery covering of the season.

The life-size paintings on the outer frontage of each cathedral contrasted charmingly with the thick snow carpeting the spacious open space forming the centre of the princely and at once ecclesiastical site, and perhaps yet

more with the somewhat extravagant amount of red cloth laid down wherever the Royal party must pass.

At nine p.m., we had taken up our position in one of the best places for seeing everything, immediately in front of the magnificent palace, at that instant containing the Royal party, and also immediately facing the like magnificent "Grand Staircase," at the summit of which the Emperor would issue from his Imperial abode.

Thousands upon thousands had by this time assembled, all enveloped, men and women alike, in heavy *shoubas*, or fur cloaks, their heads being nearly as closely enveloped, for the snow was again falling thickly, and the cold was intense.

And in the midst of the dark waving mass of heads, it was a curious sight to watch the score or two of sweepers striving their very best to keep the crimson path clear for those so soon to appear upon the scene. Again they swept—again the flaky mass fell—again they swept. And all the while I gazed from time to time wonderingly and admiringly at

the many mighty structures around, marvelled if this were in very deed myself and whether I had really the good fortune to be in the very centre of this thoroughly Eastern scene. What memories I conjured up, even though only such as were afforded by a nation's past history—what associations seemed brought to bear upon the present aspect of the situation. Scenes of triumph on the one hand, but never utter conquest—of patriotism on the other, and also keen desperation. Napoleon the First, as lord and master of the Kremlin Palace, but only for one single night, and waking up at day-break to find that the conquered city all around him was little more than a burning mass.

At half-past eleven, the ponderous bell of *Ivan Veliki*, literally, the "Great John," brought into use only on the grandest occasions, and cracked to boot, began to perform its part. Ah, how thoroughly deafening though we were at a considerable distance from it. Boom—boom—boom! Not the very shadow of harmony therein.

At five minutes to twelve an elaborately

red-coated official appeared at the summit of the staircase leading from the second floor, and already referred to, and waved a white flag. The signal was instantly comprehended. The crowd quickly recognised the fact that Royalty would soon stand before them, the soldiers stepped into their places, and the cracked bell of *Ivan Veliki* at once changed its note into what constituted, when combined with the ringing of bells belonging to another cathedral, a quick and heavy clanging. But only for those five minutes.

And then came a perfect and sudden lull. Silence seemed now the proclamation issued, every eye being fixed upon the summit of those, I believe, one hundred steps.

And the crowd did not gaze in vain—the glass doors were thrown widely open, and His Imperial Majesty, attired in full uniform, and the very essence of princely dignity, came forward alone and bowed to his assembled subjects. Alone—but only for an instant. The Imperial white plumed helmet was soon followed by those of the Czarevitch, Prince Serge, Prince Paul, Prince Gort-

schakoff, and those of forty or fifty others, all waving brightly in the snow. The enthusiasm of the people – the splendour of the Royal pageant—surpassed description. His Imperial Majesty descended the staircase slowly, bowing repeatedly meanwhile, followed by a suite and retinue consisting of some hundreds. Having reached the foot of the same he paused, came forward to the front of the low railing separating him from his people, acknowledged their plaudits once more courteously, and then turned away in princely fashion and led the way, as only the “father of his people” might, towards the chief cathedral in which the Emperors are ever crowned.

At the entrance all waited—waited for the Empress and the Princess Dagmar, whose equipage now came dashing up. The severity of the weather had, I imagine, prevented them accompanying the Emperor even in the transit of that five minutes’ space. The greeting which awaited Her Imperial Majesty—the waving of white plumes in the air—was a vision not soon to be forgotten.

Scarcely a quarter of an hour was spent in the Cathedral, the service being short, and apparently performed rapidly, but the Royal party had enacted their part—greeted cordially their faithful people, and worshipped in the “*Ouspensky Sàbor*.” The Empress and the Princess Dagmar returned to the palace in the same claret-coloured equipage, the grey horses being duly protected by also claret-coloured velvet draperies, with the Imperial arms conspicuously emblazoned thereon in gold thread. The Emperor and Czarevitch followed in the daintiest of sledges. Never did Emperor of fifty-eight years bear his age better, or possess a greater air of dignity. To-night Moscow is brilliantly illuminated, and to-morrow His Majesty will review the troops. His stay here, it is said, after all will not extend beyond two or three days. But the Moscow citizens are satisfied.

Since writing the above, I learn that an address to the Tzar, bearing forcibly upon the present state of political affairs, was presented by the nobles within the walls of the Imperial residence; as also two other ad-

dressess, emanating from the merchants—a rich class here—and those tenanting the provinces, and that an answer was awarded of which I give you a hasty translation, a loose printed sheet of the same having just been placed in my hands. The translation, if hurried, is at any rate accurate—

“ I thank you, gentlemen, for the sentiments you have just been pleased to express relative to the present political state of affairs. The circumstances in question are now more clear than formerly, and I am ready to accept your address with pleasure.

“ You already know that Turkey has yielded assent to my demands in reference to the conclusion of an armistice, framed with the view of putting an end to a scene of useless butchery in Servia and Montenegro.

“ The Montenegrins have already shown themselves in the light of true heroes in this unequal fight. With sorrow, however, I cannot say the same in respect of the Servians, although numbering in their ranks many of our Russian volunteers, the greater part of whom have sacrificed their lives as the

penalty of their attachment to the holy cause.

“I know that the whole of Russia, in conjunction with myself, takes the warmest interest in the misfortunes of these our brothers, not only by faith, but birth; but, personally, the real interests of Russia are dearer to me than aught else, and I desire to defer until the very last moment the adoption of a course which will involve the shedding of more valuable Russian blood. This is why I have endeavoured, and still endeavour, to bring about by peaceful means a real amelioration in the condition of the Christians tenanted the Balkan.

“A Conference must meanwhile be held at Constantinople, the representatives of the six Great Powers taking part therein, for the purpose of discussing the necessary articles of peace. I wish heartily that we may be able to come to some amicable arrangement, but if such be not the case, and I see that we do not obtain such guarantee as we have a right to request from the Porte, then I am firmly resolved to act decisively, and I feel

sure that all Russia will answer my appeal, should the time come in which to prefer it, the honour of their country demanding such answer at their hands. I feel confident, gentlemen, that Moscow will always be ready to take its place in the foremost ranks. May God help us in the due execution of our holy mission."





CHAPTER XVII.

THE RUSSIAN MÉNAGE—FASTS OF THE CHURCH—
SWORN—ILL-WISHING, AND SUPERSTITION IN
GENERAL—A KITCHEN CONCLAVE—AND AN IM-
PROMPTU GARRISON—WATCHING THE ENGLISH
PAPERS—AND ANXIETY AS TO ENGLISH POLICY
—HAPPY IGNORANCE—TROOPS WITHIN MATTING
—AND WORDS CHOKINGLY SPOKEN.

MOSCOW, DECEMBER 1ST—

November 18th, Russian style, 1876.

BUT *àpropos* once more to the Russian *ménage*, as referred to recently—of the servants' own food in particular, the *régime* prescribed, as also mode of eating adopted, both being utterly distinctive in character—and also of their virtues, as promised, seeing that they possess such attributes after all, and that in no ordinary degree.

The kitchen diet here is as utterly opposed to that indulged in by “*bahrin*” and “*bahrinne*”—master and mistress—as is the



Vincent Brooks, lith.

CARPENTER.

language ordinarily indulged in in the two respective quarters of the domicile, and it may be added as is the different mode adhered to by each in the matter of duly commemorating the various fasts appointed by the Church.

In respect to each of the points in question, a line seems to be drawn beyond which each and the other must not go.

“A servants’ fast,” as it was termed to me the other day.

“For them exclusively?” I questioned, not rightly understanding what was meant.

“To all intents and purposes, though not so in reality,” came in reply from one well qualified to accord answer.

It is the peasant class alone who, with exceptions of course, adhere strictly to these prescribed seasons of self-denial. The noble does so if he pleases, but as regards his dependants it is a solemn point of duty which cannot be waived.

The servants’ fortnight’s fast, alluded to, was openly spoken of as such amidst a group composed entirely of the upper class.

And the programme attaching thereto. The ordinary black bread—or even white is permitted—this perhaps by way of compensation for the inevitable absence of both meat and milk, the use of which is strictly forbidden at such seasons. Porridge, made of a sort of cassia, and not detestable by any means, comes boldly to the rescue, as also small cucumbers, pickled or fresh, both conditions being in equal favour—tea, and, item most important, raw onions. Butter and eggs also enter into the forbidden category, so that, all things considered, the list of delicacies indulged in at such times is decidedly limited. How the class in question achieve their daily task upon the strength of such a limited supply of food puzzles one, but they abide rigidly by the restricted line, and see merit in that wherein, I suppose, the noble sees none.

There are also those in this class who take upon themselves special vows for special purposes. To wit—a peasant woman attached to one of the establishments here, and specially regardful, as I was told, in the matter of

fasting, even though curiously at points mentally as regarded the keeping of other laws—those appertaining to the rights of *meum* and *tuum*, presented the head of the establishment in question with, as usual on the recurrence of his name's-day, the wonted offering, as already described.

A gentle mode of reminder, it always seems, that the gift is to be returned, at least quadrupled.

However! On a share of the same being tendered for her own acceptance, she instantly negatived receiving it. She had entered upon a solemn vow years ago never to touch this, that, and the other on Mondays.

And why?

The story was certainly peculiar in its details; but I nevertheless vouch for the truth of them as described—that in the long past one of her children was born, as all thought, dead; that so great was her disappointment thereat, that she instantly vowed that if the said item of humanity could only then and there be “tossed to and fro,” so to speak,

“into life,” she would ever hereafter deem Monday sacred on this special behalf.

To use her own words, two hours served to accomplish that upon which her heart was set ; her vow should be kept faithfully to the very end.

Tossed back into life truly. A huge amount of faith indeed ; also a corresponding amount of ignorance and at once pertinacity of intention.

Their belief also in charms, specially in the matter of warding off evils from children, seems scarcely credible, only that there is the fact itself staring one boldly in the face in a variety of instances. Nothing can more wound the feelings of a devoted mother—rather, nothing serves equally to disturb her equanimity—I again refer to the peasant class—than the fact of some stranger admiring her child. She at once sees evil in the act, feels morally certain that her child has been ill-wished, if not bewitched, and that mischief will ensue, and sets herself to work forthwith, with the view of dispelling, as far as may be, the so-called evil influence. Either holy water is

thrown over the child in question, prayers being said meanwhile, or else more stringent measures are taken. Some specially prepared charcoal, as also powder, is set light to, and the unfortunate object of so much solicitude is "held over the fumes thereof;" or, to speak more accurately, is, I believe, moved round and round the smoking mass three times in a sort of circle. "The day is gained—the victory won"—the evil influence forthwith dispelled!

This only by way of proving the yet prevalence of intense superstition.

Monday is the "unlucky" day here for entering upon new undertakings of any kind—and Sunday the fortuitous one. A dove must not be killed upon any account, seeing that it is, in figurative fashion, the earthly symbol of the Spirit from above—I confess to rather liking the last-named item of belief—and a *bouquet*, amongst a hundred other such trivialities, must never be presented unless a kopeck—the hundredth part of a rouble—is given in exchange.

But the most painful prejudices existing are

those already referred to, with regard to the ill-wishing of the junior members of creation. Some members of the community are even supposed to be habitual evil-wishers, and their presence is shunned proportionately. So much for ignorance at the root, which not even the requirements of their religion serve to meet. So much also for prejudice and custom, which only increased civilisation can hope adequately to do successful combat with in the future.

And whilst the noble keeps open-house upstairs, and, it may be—herein I do not venture to speak definitely as regards all—shirks the recurrence of fasting-days as he would those of the plague, a scene is enacted below-stairs at once characteristic of strict fidelity to at least one phase of ecclesiastical law. The group of “servers”—men and women alike—sit round the rough kitchen table, their elbows resting thereupon, their attention duly rivetted on a circular dish standing in the centre, containing fried or baked cassia, the staple commodity of daily food—invariably preceded, however, by a huge

bowl of soup, made either of meat or vegetables, as the ecclesiastical season permits. But my picture specially bears reference to the dish of cassia. Each member of the assembled party holds a large spoon, and all partake in turn, but at their utmost leisure, discussing, as a matter of course, volubly meanwhile, the merits and demerits of those upstairs. None of the company begin the repast until all are present, in order that all may "start fair."

But of the promised merits of the Russian peasantry. They are hardworking, in the very best sense of the term, and clever to boot, at the various tasks assigned them, rising early and "taking rest late," a curious contrast as regards early hours, to the other, higher, class. They are patient and enduring, even though exposed woefully to such rigours of the climate as the "noble" class take good care to shield themselves from personally. And another item which strikes me forcibly. They are amply contented with such inexpensive items of clothing, food, sleeping accommodation, and so forth, as

would only meet with scorn and disdain at the hands of any English *confrère*.

Preparations for the war meet one on all sides, and are being carried on, too, in hearty fashion. Wherever one goes this is the one topic of conversation. Is it to be wondered at, seeing that trade, commerce, and almost every other branch of industry are well-nigh at a standstill in Russia until the nation knows for a certainty what is to be its ultimate fate—rather what is to be its ultimate course of action? The money already spent in the mere transport of troops is enormous, and the fresh loan guaranteed speaks for the immensity of all that is anticipated. The mobilization of troops in the south is going on rapidly. Day after day the greater part of the ordinary passenger trains are devoted entirely to the reception and conveyance of troops. The citizens are roused to the highest state of excitement, for nearly every one has friends and relations “bound” for the probable fight, and the hearts of all beat in sympathy one with the

other. The scene enacted at the Moscow and Brest railway terminus every two or three hours throughout both day and night, is one that can scarcely be pictured unless actually witnessed. One of the principal officials there—an officer in the army, by the way, but retired from active service—has at his own request, war being on the *tapis*, resumed his place in the army as colonel, but also retains his post at the station. By a stroke of the pen, therefore, the results are obvious. He at once takes rank as commandant of the station now designated military, his monthly pay has known a sudden and considerable increase, and his dress, from superfine black cloth, has transformed itself into that of the commandant of a garrison. The transformation is complete. A sword touching the ground, and spurs, as also a red flag hoisted when the commandant is quartered within the garrison walls, assist each and all in doing honour to the new state of affairs.

But this is only an item—significant, however, of other far more important changes working in this city, for it is of this city I

speak personally, within the course of the past three or four weeks. The upper classes profess themselves as certain that war will be the only alternative, and discuss with dark flashing eyes the probable number of days which will be required, when once in readiness, for reaching Constantinople.

One item, however, is indisputable, and is perhaps somewhat amusing after all this amount of expressed self-assurance. Each and all watch with avidity the various translations from the English newspapers, relative to English opinion, appearing from time to time in their own, I believe tolerably promptly. Anxiety is rather the word for it. "The policy adopted by England matters little," was the utterance I heard indulged in by many a Conservative Muscovite some months ago. "Her power"—this with a shrug possibly—"weighs nothing whatever now in the balance." But the individuals referred to—all leading men here—now watch such translations, as I have already said, with curious interest. England is a power, certainly—and also, yet a great

one. This is the only verdict that can be drawn from the now self-evident regard paid to the course which she may see fit to adopt. A "tight little island," possibly, but also an important one in the scale of human affairs.

The peasant class, on whom, after all, the brunt of the entire business falls, are considerably less sanguine in the matter than their more wealthy brethren. When questioned as to their own personal ideas as to the result of the war, if such there be, they shake their heads dubiously, answering—many of them—" *Di Bokh!*"—a wonted form of appeal heavenwards—"May-be matters will end differently to what you think. God may be against us—and then"—But the thoughts of every peasant are in reality as deeply bent upon the future struggle as those of any other. Every peasant, did I say? There is no rule, however, without exception. A *frotteur* whom I encountered the other day was taken utterly by surprise when the war was mentioned incidentally in his presence. The war!—Servia!—No, he had never heard of either the one or the other—did not in fact

know that there was such a place. So much, it would seem, for full occupation and also a not too enquiring mind. Contented with the "common round—the daily task"—that of polishing, in dancing-fashion, some thirty or forty floors *per diem*—it had not occurred to him that war was possibly at his very heels, and that therefore the more use he made of them at present in the due pursuit of his avocation, the better for himself. Happy *frotteur*—if ignorance, parenthetically, be at all times bliss.

But of the scene at the Moscow and Brest railway station last evening. Amidst the deep snow and frost in which this city is now enveloped, every minaret and dome sparkling brilliantly under its flaky adornment, we hired one of the many hundreds of sledges to be seen waiting at the corner of every street, and sped along quickly over the frozen ground. Ah, the delightful sensation as we skimmed onwards. Both body and mind seemed alike exhilarated, and the yet falling snow, drifting right in one's face, only added to such exhilaration. The adaptation of oneself to

circumstances becomes a wonderful feature in existence here, as doubtless under all conditions of life, but in these regions the power, it would seem, is specially developed. Some months ago I should have winced had any one declared that I could stand such rigours without flinching; and now how phlegmatically borne, thanks to an amount of wadded wrappings from head to foot, which are so heavy that the act of walking in them is well-nigh an impossibility.

The sledge could not, however, proceed further.

The station was surrounded by thousands of soldiers—not those, however, going by the next “military train”—all bidding adieu to their friends, and all heavily knapsacked and in their winter gear. Tea-tables, a novel feature in such a scene, were ranged outside the building, and *samavárs* by the score were in continuous requisition. The inevitable *chi-peet*, or “tea fight,” in which these Russians indulge on every occasion when they would show either marked honour or hospitality, was in hand in all directions. A

mug brimful of weak but boiling tea in one hand, a lump of white sugar in the other, was the picture presented on all sides. Votky has, it appears, been contributed gratis for the use of the many regiments either starting from, or passing through, Moscow—this by one of the citizens; and Philipova, the famous baker of the place, has yet outdone this act of generosity by himself contributing 4,000 *kalatches*—small and curiously shaped loaves—*per diem*, for the use of the soldiers. Other large gifts have also been bestowed to the amount of some hundred thousands of roubles.

But the picture within. Our party, fortunately, speedily found itself placed immediately in front of the assembled thousands, and at the extreme end of the platform facing the line of carriages, numbering, including waggons and ambulances, well-nigh, I should say a hundred. Right along the platform, from end to end thereof, and in closely packed rows, stood the troops ready to step, when the word of command should be given, into the vans and carriages fronting them—all

second and third-class, by the way. The winter-like aspect of their dress suggested some idea of the rigours which they were about to face. Each wore a thick leathern *bashlik* round his neck, of the same colour and texture as his dress, ready to be thrown over his head and face should occasion require; his knapsack, heavily coated with fur, and a pair of prodigious "Russian boots," being both strapped athwart his shoulders. The notes of the National Hymn fell at first softly and inspiringly, then more loudly upon our ears; the blessing accorded by the deep-toned voices of the priests was granted, and we watched meanwhile with intense interest the hardy, deep-set features of the troops around. All stalwart and muscular, but being only some detachments of a foot regiment, and for the greater part mere youths as it seemed, the height of none was more than medium. A silence now; then again prayer and singing for victory in the hour of battle; then again the notes of the National Hymn, in which all present joined—and then the word of command was given, and the foremost in

the ranks had instantly laid hold upon the carriage doors. "In with you forthwith," seemed the watchword given. Heavy, solid straw matting was suspended from the top of every doorway, as a shelter, however feeble, against the rigours without. But once safely within the carriages, and strict military discipline being dispensed with, a change came o'er the spirit of the dream, and that a marked one. Shouting, shuffling, and rollicking marked the demeanour of a large share of the occupants—they had well-nigh all, it was only self-evident, been "imbibing" more or less ere starting, and were in a state of correspondingly hilarious spirits. Some, however, wore an aspect far otherwise, being either wrapped in thought, or striving wistfully until the very last moment to push their heads beyond the matting which so soon would hide them entirely, for a space at any rate, from the outer world. The painful scenes enacted on the platform as the last adieux were said may be imagined. But enough of this. They were too heartrending. *It was my business some time ago to describe*

to you the scene enacted at the Petersburg—otherwise Nicolaieff—station on the occasion of the departure of the Muscovitish volunteers, but the two scenes, although necessarily alike characteristic in many respects, were nevertheless different in aspect, and served to elicit feelings of a decidedly different character the one from the other. In one case, a strictly personal affair; in the other a national, carried out at Imperial behest. The sword of self-asserted heroism in itself served to uphold those first taking it upon themselves to lead the way; the sword of duty and obedience, as well as that of honour and glory, leads on those who have now followed. The splendid “chargers,” carefully stowed away amidst an abundance of straw and hay, elicited our keen sympathy.

There was scarcely a passer-by who had not a kindly word for the brave fellows. “Ay”—this in answer to our greeting, from a blackheaded and also black moustached fellow—“we must all die one day—what matters it therefore when?” I knew that he spoke truly, only that something in the

tone in which the words were given touched a wrong chord. And then, leaving many aching hearts behind it, the long line of carriages started direct for Brest, in Lithuania, a journey extending over three days and nights.

Twenty degrees of frost, according to Reaumur! Can you feel for us? And at thirty degrees of same, the birds freeze in the air.





CHAPTER XVIII.

OUT-HERODING HEROD—THE BLACKSMITH'S BRIDGE
—NEETCHAIVO—HORRIBLY PERSONAL—ENDEAR-
ING TO THE LAST DEGREE—"GENTLE SLUMBER"
—ADIEU TO THE MERCURY—SWORD TAKEN
FROM THE TURKS AT NAVARINO.

MOSCOW, DECEMBER 21st—
9th, Russian style, 1876.

SUCH a winter as the present one has never been experienced by even the oldest Muscovite inhabitant. That occurring nine years ago was, he tells you, a severe one indeed—one not readily to be forgotten by either man or beast—"but the present season"—and his voice is meanwhile gruff and hoarse, the result, it may be, of an instant's exposure to the freezing atmosphere—well, then, it out-Herod's Herod, he would possibly add, were he in the least cognisant of the adage, which of course he is not. The thermometer this morning—the shortest day by the way—de-

notes incontestably, as also without the slightest show of consideration for the physical constitution of a hapless, shivering stranger like myself, twenty-eight degrees of frost.

One trembles even whilst writing the words.

And this, remember, is simply as stated by the thermometer nooked, doubtless heartlessly, immediately outside one of the double windows gracing the southern aspect of the house—and that, too, built solely of pine wood—in which I have the luck to be quartered.

Well—some one who has just come in from the Blacksmith's Bridge—not a bridge at all, by the way, but simply the best and most fashionable centre for shops of every description in Moscow—declares, "*parole d'honneur sacré*," as these foreigners word it everlastingly, that the thermometer there stands at 30 degrees. I congratulate myself upon the fact that I am not there—only that, unfortunately, truth ever rising to the surface, as *an urchin* to his heels when tripped up by

miserable urchin number two, business takes me to that identical spot to-morrow. *Neetchaivo!*—never mind—as again these foreigners would sympathetically (?) observe.

I would not even for my best friends in England to see the manner in which I shall then be “wadded and enveloped” from head to foot. Only that such outward preparations are as needful as is the possession of a calm and cool brain-work when casting in one’s lot amongst these disciples and descendants of Peter the Great. If you fail in either of these two points you are “done for”—and utterly.

I have just returned from a long exploring expedition in the deep snow, bearing all the while indefatigably down upon the north. Though face and head were alike closely protected by a thick “woolly” covering, precluding perfect vision, and stifling in almost any other part of the world, the indescribable bitterness of the air acted well-nigh as a hammer might be supposed to officiate upon my brow. Throb—throb; beat—beat. No mercy—no hope of it even. “No abatement”

whatever, to adopt a tradesman's phraseology. I could not—dare not either—glance about me. The icy air, if I peeped for a moment, blinded me, metaphorically speaking. I felt assured that even the moisture on my eyelids must have already become congealed, and—natural pride—admit it—wondered how I looked; whether more than ordinarily queer—and whether my eyelashes indeed represented so many, number not given, infinitesimal icicles. I raised my doubly gloved-hand, but to adopt an anomaly—also quote—it “wouldn't raise,” being stiff and numb. And yet the sun—it being midday—was shining brilliantly—I had almost said fiercely—the snow sparkling gallantly beneath its rays.

A glorious sight. Not such, my friends far away—to whom, by the way, I am at this instant tempted to wish a remarkably and exceptionally happy Christmas, suggesting also that you should be decently grateful for such mercies as are yours, including coals, and those red ones—likewise a civilized and sizeable grate into which to put them—not such snow, my friends, I repeat, as it is your

wont to gaze upon at this odd time and that—thin and sparse—or mottled or black—or grey or brown—or it may be remorsefully fretting its life away, and dwindling in hot haste into nothing, as if repenting sorely ever having fallen from above, and doing its very best to amend matters.

No, not such, indeed; but stern, resolute, gaily frosted snow, such as is determined upon making its living presence known to every one. No sham this; no pretension. The flakes fall thickly, and then lie there decisively—as the “tree which falls.” A second layer, only to lie there also alike frozen; and a third, and fourth.

A thaw! Absurd. Why, such a catastrophe would spoil the entire fun. No, no. Leave such stupid, half-and-half measures to the rule pervading Western lands. 'Tis true, the *dvornik*, or doorkeeper attached to each abode, packed previously in his yellow leathern coat, and other “leatherny” equipments, like an Esquimaux, clears a narrow pathway on your express superior behalf from the house to the road, banking the

thick white mass high on either side. True, also, that in the main thoroughfares the pathways are alike brushed and swept ; but there are no “ melting moments ; ” not one. Again the snow falls—falls—falls—each fresh layer being only as white as the one preceding it. Each reposes spotlessly, each remains contented with its lot, to quote well remembered “ copybook.”

“ And the sky, such a splendid blue, too,” I exclaimed enthusiastically. “ Who would have thought it ? What a picture ! ”

“ Close up your face again, quickly,” shrieked my companion, a born and bred Muscovite. “ A picture indeed ! ”

This last probably referring to the then present condition of my own features. Horribly personal !

But the next picture presented was yet more deplorable and undesired. Not “ down among the dead men,” certainly, but down full length upon the icy mass—fur pelisse—“ woolly things” and all. How exquisitely humiliating ! Fit object of interest, too, for neighbour skilled in the use of pencil and brush.

“Up again !” More easily said, however, than accomplished. This veritable footpath of ice. Skating gratis. The marvel is, after all, that any one here at such seasons ever manages to preserve their equilibrium.

“*Neetchaivo*” sounded nasally in my ears. I looked up, shaking myself meanwhile, and the snow descending feather-fashion from my garments. Another picture, only that now I felt inclined to laugh—not cry. It was all very well for him—an *eezvostchik*—to speak thus. *Neetchaivo*, indeed ! I simply stared at him—through, of course, so to speak, said “woolly wrapper.”

“Miserable being,” I mentally ejaculated ; only that the fellow, perhaps by way of contrast, was smiling blandly all the time. Propped up against the wall, he was patiently waiting for “hire,” his face as red every whit as a turkey cock’s and his beard, moustache, and whiskers, likewise his fur cap and coat here and there, a white frozen mass. A magnificent specimen this of Russian endurance. Was it to be wondered at that he had given vent to that a hundred times-to-be-heard-in-

the-day ejaculation—*Neetchaivo!* Only that in spite of all the rigours attacking them—not in the least contributing to his facial adornments—said beard, moustaches, and whiskers would, the probability is, stand him yet good service for many a long year to come.

Habit is second nature, as matrons are wont to observe. He did not offer to pick me up—why should he? He was far too cold. Poor underpaid *eezvostchik*—seeing that at such seasons as the present no amount of money, it is my solemn conviction, amply compensates him for allowing his blood to freeze hourly and minutely on behalf of, as “Mr. Micawber” would have it, “an ungrateful public.” Perhaps—it has just occurred to me—it is somewhat in consideration of all this admirable self-abnegation—suppose we dub it self-devotion—that the “public” referred to never fail to address the representatives of this class in terms of not only striking but comical endearment. I wondered thereat at first—ignorantly, of course—even went so far as to put such sen-

timent of wonderment into words ; but the ready and invariable answer, " Oh, we always do so. Everybody does so here," at once served to clench the matter. I ventured no further question. But it does sound uncommonly strange—and I still stick to it—to hear these red-faced, frozen-faced, watchful-faced, bargaining, and ordinarily-scolded fellows addressed in the very same breath, and at the very same moment perchance as that in which they were " growled at," as "*doosetchka*"—dear one—" *goloubtchik*"—beloved one, or soft dove—" *brat*"—meaning brother—and other expressions of the same kind. " You're cheating me, *goloubtchik*, and you know it," or " You're drunk," with the same endearing epithet appended ; or " That's another falsehood, *doosetchka*"—or, " If you don't drive faster, *goloubtchik*, I'll not pay you a penny," are the never-failing modes of address.

Fancy such treatment of a London cabman. How he would stare—or, what is more probable, would deem it incumbent upon him to drive his " fare " forthwith,

frantically, to that land of refuge designated Bedlam.

In Siberia, I have to-day been told by "one who has been there to see," the thermometer—Reaumur—marks at its worst—I could not, if I wished it, write it otherwise—the effort would be simply superhuman under such circumstances—40 degrees. In Moscow 30 degrees is the lowest stage in the mercury's descent almost ever known.

Apropos of sleepiness. Was there ever such a drowsy-inclining land as this? I imagine not—excepting, indeed, the regions of the North Pole itself, where, as report says, a state of somnolence throughout the day is the wonted, also normal condition. The presence of snow alone induces sleep. Unquestionably. "Who denies of it, Betsy?" as Mrs. Gamp would have said, had she been here. I am heartily glad she is not, for there are "characters" enough without her, quite—"characters" in plenty.

But even without the presence of such snow a prodigious amount of sleep is inevitable as regards the life of a true Russian.

Sleep he must have to an alarming extent, though the chances are that during the greater part of the night he is devoting his time and energies to card-playing, smoking, walking up and down his suite of rooms, or to the vehement discussion of some question, political, social, domestic—or in all probability, “gossiping”—which has just occurred to him. But then, he sleeps afterwards—and that, too, as “sound as a top”—sleeps perchance until the middle of the following day, and takes another “gentle snooze” perhaps of five or six hours, extending until his late dinner hour. His tumbler of tea in the morning, at nine or ten, heavily sugared and *sans crème*, only serves as a gentle “refresher.” He perchance “turns again on his pillow,” to quote, as also—no mark of disrespect in the least intended—“his heavy head.” His *déjeuner* at twelve, consisting—I speak now of the noble’s fare—of delicately prepared *cotelettes*—either *de veau* or *de bœuf*—or of fish, or any other delicacy of the kind, with the wonted accompaniments, black bread, small cucumbers, pickled in winter—the uni-

versal complement of *grebés*.—mushrooms—*votky*, sherry, and the chances are again “*chi*”—if not coffee—is a meal which serves duly to restore him to all the pleasures of life and society. And thus the day is parcelled out.

And the “lady’s” day—the first portion of it at any rate—is spent pretty much in identical fashion. There are exceptions of course—when were there not, to every rule laid down in this world? But I speak of the majority, leaving the minority to defend themselves.

I am glancing down into the court-yard—an extensive one. Again—Ugh! The *dvornik* still, with his customary assiduity, preserves what may serve as a pathway—but even that pathway itself is nothing, after all, but a thick mass of frozen snow and ice. But the precise why and wherefore of my shivering afresh—that the two hills of ice and snow thus inevitably abetted by this indefatigable being mount already above the level of my study window—on first floor, by the way—not “ground,” according to the

belief of some. Can you forgive a "feller," therefore, for shivering under the influence of such an aspect? Even the "double sets" of windows ranged everywhere, are this afternoon frozen inside as well as out. Father Frost has traced the most lovely foliage upon them both—the hand of no artist could have outdone him in beauty of workmanship. But—*mirabile dictu*—again the mercury has fallen to thirty-one degrees—in English *parlance*, following the guidance of "Fahrenheit," to thirty-seven below zero. Even the natives are in a state of amazement. What next? they question. And the answer—that half-an-hour later the carefully regarded mercury has sunk to thirty-five—"Reaumur"—has, in fact, totally disappeared from view, such being the lowest extent of depth ever dreamt of in any ordinary civilized thermometer. The somewhat warmer air in the rooms has in curious fashion—consoling fact, at any rate—now transmogrified itself into snow, reposing upon the interior of the inner windows, and I have taken the liberty—

trophy-fashion it may be supposed—of “fingering” my name thereon in large characters.

“Ice and snow in the very rooms!” exclaims one citizen after another—volubly, you may be quite sure. “Never knew such a winter.”

Consolation this, at any rate—we are therefore, each and all, gaining fresh experience—and that, too, simultaneously. Charmingly sympathetic!

An old noble has just been showing me, with infinite pride and self-satisfaction, a somewhat ponderous sword which he keeps in a prominent corner of his dwelling.

“There,” said he, “that once belonged to an old Turk. I took it from him myself in open, hand-to-hand fight, at the battle of Navarino, in 1827.”

I duly admired “delicate item” presented; hoped at the same time, heartily and privately, that such item would never have the felicity of finding its way into my own mortal frame.

“And this magnificent handle,” I asked,

“and this broad red ribbon, embroidered with gold thread, attached ? ”

“ Oh—both are Russian, of course,” came cheerfully. “ The blade alone is absolutely as it was—Turkish,” and he threw a peculiar emphasis into the enunciation of the last word, significant it might be of fifty things—I did not deem it precisely expedient to ask of what especially. “ The handle”—an elaborate one, certainly—“ I had made to order.”

“ And the red ribbon—?”

“ Is significant of the Order of St. Anne, one of the highest of our Orders.”

“ And the very highest ? ” asked your inquiring correspondent.

“ St. George, and the colour in such case is yellow,” he added, quickly, as if with the view of forestalling any further questioning on my part.

But still I did not spare that Russian noble. Why should I ? “ And the ordinary ribbon attached to a Russian sword is ? ”—he glanced at me a moment, as if marvelling at

such English pertinacity—modest thirst for knowledge, why did he not term it ?

“ White, with silver threadwork,” and without giving me another chance, he at once set off to pace the rooms.





CHAPTER XIX.

MIDNIGHT SUCCEEDING CHRISTMAS-DAY IN AN
EASTERN LAND—BALS MASQUÉS.

MOSCOW, JANUARY 6TH—

December 25th, Russian style, 1876.

AND whilst you all, old friends in England, took your places cosily and in self-congratulatory fashion around blazing, roaring fires, wishing each other innumerable returns of many happy Christmases, and all the other wonted compliments of the season, your luckless, once associate only “thought of such things”—dared to remember that such agreeable episodes in the chapter had ever been enacted.

But absurd. The idea of even dreaming of a romantic fit, well-nigh buried up to one’s eyes and ears in snow, and the mercury in the thermometer standing at such an ebb!

Another *addendum*, too—tolerably significant—tolerably suggestive at date referred to,

—well, then, of hilarity at a discount—that, not a soul in the regions around you is cognisant of the fact that this, and this only, is the Christmas Day of which you could once boast, and that you have therefore the felicity of passing the season in question without so much as receiving a single greeting at the lips of any one. That portion of the eventful day which you have the luck to spend out of doors is devoted either to sledging, or slipping, or tumbling downright, as the case may be, and consequently being picked up again, or in rubbing your nasal organ frantically, with the view of ascertaining whether the same be frost-bitten, or in blowing upon your poor frozen fingers with a like view of discovering whether life may possibly yet be restored to them—or if in the “pinewood” house another cheerful alternative lies before you—costs, in fact, nothing extra. You are welcome to rest your back firmly, martyr-fashion, against the white marble stove heated within some half-dozen hours ago. You have the gratification of knowing that you are at least within the vicinity of an

abundance of hot air, which is pouring out gradually from the small, now open trap-door inserted just above your head. And in this attitude you think pensively and despairingly of sparkling flames and cheerful red-hot coal peeping from between bars, and—. However, this after all is better than nothing, you reckon, doing the utmost possible, of course, to be philosophical and make the best of matters. There might be no stove to which to—well, then, hold on by, if that be all. All might be icy, even in the house—what a marvellous possession that of a duly grateful temperament, by the way—and instead of this the air all around is growing hotter and hotter, even to suffocation. These mental reflections, numbers one, two, and three. Another moment and you must really give up that comfortable standing nook. Your head is throbbing violently—over the temples more especially, and in particular behind your ears. Your heart, too, is beating in loud and most unusual fashion. You move away quickly—almost, to boot, staggeringly—and find your way instantanously to one of the sofas close at

hand. You have ample choice therein, too—this supposing that you have taken up your quarters in what is always called the “sofa-room” in Russia, there being ordinarily one in every abode here. What a charming idea, says somebody, strongly predisposed to laziness and snooziness. Sofas all round the room—for it is even so. How pleasant the arrangement for a dozen chattily-disposed, indolent folk. But episode number two. One of my companions has already found his way to sofa in question—has arrived there before me.

“Oogahr!” he exclaims, disgustedly. “I’ve felt it all the morning, and matters are growing worse every minute.”

“Oogahr!” I stuttered. “What, in the name of fortune, is oogahr?”

“Oogahr!” exclaimed the mistress of the establishment, forthwith throwing open, as also appearing at the door—this to my, instantly, indescribable relief—and looking, emphatically speaking, yellow, partly owing to suffocation, but quite as much to vexation. “You must both of you,” she pursued,

glancing promptly at the two "yous" alluded to with considerable anxiety—"you must both of you, I say, go out at once into the open air—into the snow—and walk up and down for at least an hour."

"Oogahr!" I gasped, for the second time. "What's oogahr? The baker has poisoned the bread, I know"—this confidently—"that's it. I thought it looked uncommonly white this morning."

"Don't joke," came angrily; "or you either, sir," addressing my companion.

"Joke! I couldn't, if I wished it," was the pale retort on the part of the latter, "I can't even raise my head."

"So much the worse for you, then—and you know it. Your lives are both in danger, I tell you."

How we both managed to stagger out of that hot air I hardly know. But it might have been worse than that, far, as I afterwards learned. Nothing more nor less than fumes of charcoal, which, if inhaled for a much longer space, might have served to lay at least two other victims at their feet. I did

not understand the matter then—but now know all about it. Nothing like personal experience in this world. The twenty logs of wood, or thereabouts, had been duly placed in rows and layers within the base of the inner stove lined with brick. The kindling process had worked well—the flames within had roared—and then the entire mass of wood had been reduced to charcoal, as it was supposed—Mehoavitch, the man in attendance, having raked the red mass over and over and over again, with the view of ascertaining that every atom was duly consumed. He had then considered that all was safe for “closing,” as it is termed, and had hermetically “fixed up” the one small doorway, as also all other *media* whereby the air might find either ingress or egress. Then, after the wonted certain prescribed space of time had elapsed, he had performed the second edition in his official capacity, opened one of the vent holes nooked well-nigh at the top of the stove, thus allowing the hot air to stream, as already described, into the adjoining apartment. But Mehoavitch, like other men in the

world—ay, and women too, for the matter of that—had for once in his life made a blunder. A solitary particle of wood had yet remained undevoured by the fiery element, and herein had lain a very fund of mischief. On the shoulders of Mehoavitch had well-nigh rested the entire responsibility of putting an end to the mortal career of two of earth's pilgrims—and one of them, too, an unhappy "furriner." No wonder that this novelist and that have made from time to time such ample use of "charcoal fumes" when "casting about" anxiously in their minds as to how they can most conveniently and readily dispose of their respective heroes or, it may be, heroines. The process is at least not difficult of accomplishment—not difficult either as trenching in the least upon the powers of the imagination. The *finale*, if thus sought, is marvellously easy of attainment, at once natural, and most credible of belief.

"Then, it wasn't the baker, after all," I exclaimed, again stuttering, as, hastily enveloped in those everlasting, as it would seem,

shoubas, by the hands of another somebody—*vitch*, we were turned out, like “schoolboys to play,” upon the icy pathway—I shudder to think of it. “It was”—no one had as yet seemed to think it worth while to enlighten my darkness relative to the point in question—“the butcher perhaps, or the *dvornik*,” I proceeded.

“The *dvornik*! Why, he wouldn’t harm a soul. He doesn’t even owe anything a grudge—excepting the snow—ha, ha! Why, it was *oogahr*, I tell you. We’ve all told you so. Why don’t you remember? Don’t talk as if you were an idiot.”

And still, to tell the honest truth, I had but a dim perception as to the real state of the case.

Such was my own English Christmas Day—one scarcely to be remembered with any peculiar sense of merriment. Nothing had even tended to remind one that this special season was fast approaching. Even at the English Church, the preceding Sunday, the chaplain had formally and unhesitatingly given out the Psalms for the 12th day of the

month, thus conceding fully to the Russian or Old Style—thus also in reality remitting the arrival of Christmas to well-nigh three weeks' hence. I could not help wishing that at least for once he had indulged in a leap, rendered a hiatus of those perpetually recurring "twelve days' difference."

I finished up the day by wondering whether I had not indeed been all the time dreaming on the score of not only the return of Christmas this year, but of everything else.

But to-night, at this midnight hour—better late than never, you will perhaps say—I have woke up—woke up, rather, yesterday, when told that the Russian six weeks' fast from animal food and so forth, as already described—a fast, however, kept mainly by the peasants—also by many members of the *koopairt*, or merchant class—was well-nigh at an end, but that it ended by a stroke of at once singular and resolute determination.

Not a single member of the class referred to touches edible or drinkable of any description whatever after supper-time on the day preceding that designated Christmas Eve

until the first star appears on the termination of the eve in question. I ventured to question many—those with whom I felt I might do so without causing any offence—but there came only one answer in each case—We touch nothing in the shape of either food or drink “until the first star arises.” So runs the adage—wording thereof rather; and the vigorous way in which each stands, so to speak, by his text—this faithful abiding by an old tradition—interested me amazingly. Fidelity is always attractive, in whatever form presented.

On the recurrence of the eve itself, the scene presented in Moscow was inexpressibly interesting. Each of the nearly six hundred churches, mantling their minarets and domes in all directions, were brilliantly lighted up, and within the walls of each and all a splendid “vesper” service was celebrated, commencing at the early hour of six o’clock or thereabouts. Weird, gipsy-like music, all of course vocal, was echoed along the vaulted and elaborate roofings and walls. The treble voices of the boys rang

out clear and loud, supported on the same side of the choir by numerous "basses," whilst, in a variety of cases, nuns took up their station on the other, and led the refrain plaintively. The sacred edifices literally swarmed with peasants, crossing themselves continually, bending low well-nigh as frequently, prostrating themselves on the ground at all unlooked-for moments, threading their way slowly, but systematically, amidst the surrounding throng, from one holy shrine to another, from this "blessed" picture to that, probably only its next door neighbour, kissing the feet thereof, the hands also—these and the face of each, being the only portion of such pictures ever presented to view in any Russian church—and performing the same adulatory service as regarded crosses and other items, such as relics of clothing belonging to saints, each and all of them also "blessed."

It must be a tremendous, and at once difficult business achieving all this, seeing that every one is striving to attain this special goal or that, in spite of all difficulties lying in the way—and this, it must be remembered,

underneath the weight of a dense mass of clothing. A heavy fur *shouba*, or cloak, and, as worn by the women for the greater part, a likewise heavy woollen shawl or *bashlik*, bound tightly round the head, ordinarily *sans* aught approaching to bonnet beneath—such garments, I say, prove decided encumbrances in a pressing, as also heated, concourse of people.

But duly achieve their special and separate aims on this behalf did each member of those thousands upon thousands of Muscovites in this old Eastern city. Fitting preparation, as they regarded it, for the *fête* so close at hand. This is the day, too, on which presents are scattered—sent about in all directions; but Christmas cards, such as fly, so to speak, from hand to hand at this season in old England, are unknown here—every bit as much as is snow-balling, for which demonstration of exuberant feeling on the part of the junior members of creation there would seem to be such ample field. The shops appertaining to the *confiseurs* present a most inviting aspect, the windows of the same being literally filled

with monster cakes made expressly for the season. I took note of several. Every possible device is brought into requisition for the purpose. A "sucking pig" stood before me, apparently just removed from the "spit," and placed upon a dish surrounded by fragrant gravy. The deception proved complete at first sight, but I soon realised the fact that "sucking pig" in question was, after all, naught but a miserable sham, merely composed of chocolate, cream, and delicious *bon-bons*—delicious, I would add, in the estimation of those endowed with a taste for the same. "Artichokes" also stand before one; fish, as if at that identical moment waiting to be "sliced," and inimitably "finned;" exquisite "leathern *malles*," or trunks, with separate straps banding them, each duly buckled, with handles, lock and key, and all complete—and all composed only of dark brown chocolate. Another stood before me tied across with one of the daintiest of damask *serviettes*, tipped at each end with golden fringe; but this, again, was only a case of deception. "*Tout ce qui brille n'est pas*

or"—although, again, as I have heard it said, nothing in all reality glitters but gold itself.

Such are some of the "artful attractions" of a *confiseur's* window at this season.

Late hours are of course a standing rule on such an evening, but I had again the questionable pleasure of being roused from slumber at three o'clock punctually the following morning. Church bells were clashing around me on all sides. I knew that there was an early service everywhere at four, last-
ing, I believe, until eight.

At nine I found my way into one of the handsomest, and at once darkest, churches of which Moscow boasts, immediately opposite the spacious pile of buildings, designated "Widows' Home." The scene within was gorgeous—the singing again wild, weird, and attractive—the peasants, also now many of the upper class, being alike dressed in their very best.

A grand and high *fête* this, as all termed it—only excelled in grandeur by that of Easter.

The "standing" business is the most tire-

some part of their services—and the endurance of such excessive, suffocating heat, after emerging from the freezing outer atmosphere.

In the meantime—rather throughout the entire course of the day—the amount of personal congratulations falling upon the ears of every householder throughout the city at the lips of not only his actual dependants, but also at those of *dvorniks*, *postilions*, otherwise postmen, sweepers, watchmen and city *attachés* of every description, is edifying as a *spectacle* at any rate, if not as regards the purses of those thus attacked. But this side of the picture presented was not so utterly new to me, after all. I have heard of Christmas boxes ere now in the course of my existence.

Every female domestic receives, as a recognised matter of right, a new dress, in addition to other items; every *dvornik* a red flannel shirt,

Then came the evening of the important day, when every household in Moscow either possessing children as denizens, or those possessing the attribute of loving them, boasts its Christmas tree, brilliantly lighted

up. Scarcely a single house constitutes a blank herein. Some spend thousands of roubles on behalf of the decorations involved, every member of the gay company present, also every dependant in the family, being presented with gifts from the "tree."

I "sledged" through the apparently deserted streets about ten o'clock on my way from one of these receptions. It was, as it were, scudding through a forsaken city; but I had only to lift my eyes towards either side of the road along which I passed to realise the fact that merriment and gaiety were in reality close at hand on every side. Blinds are not drawn down hermetically here as in England; one not only sees a blaze of light in every window as one goes along, but witnesses also in many instances the fund of mirth and excitement going on within. One sees the "trees" mounting frequently to the roof—one hears the sound of "tripping feet" dancing round them. But my quill is surely growing romantic, and on the contrary it behoves me to be specially practical and on my guard this Russian Christmas night, my

eezvostchik being in a semi-state of intoxication, plying me with a variety of incongruous and needless questions, and occasionally drawing up the reins in absent fashion, as if suggesting to the quadruped calling him *protem* master, that instead of progressing it should stand stock-still. To suggest the word "*skurry*"—make haste—only induced him again to become chatty. I recognised the fact—I am for ever recognising facts here, it would seem—that I was entirely in his hands, should they prove either merciful or the reverse.

Arrived at our destination at last, he demanded an infinitely extra fare, scouted the idea that I had made the ordinary and requisite bargain with him previous to starting, and hinted that I did not in the least know what I was talking about. So by way of avoiding a street brawl, I hurriedly—not "thought of the morrow," to quote, but cried quarter, and mildly yielded to his suggestion, it being—happy mode of explaining away a veritable instance of huge moral weakness!—Christmas time.

Throughout the course of the ensuing week masquerading, I am told, will be the fashion everywhere—such being the privilege the festive season affords. Large parties of masqueraders are formed, and each member thoroughly transmogrified, they perform during the course of an evening it may be quite a round of visits upon personal friends, who, however, thanks to the completeness of the disguise effected, rarely recognise them. Gentlemen go out dressed as ladies, ladies as gentlemen, and rôles of every description are duly supported and carried out with the utmost vigour and spirit. Masquerading in all shapes and forms, would seem to hold special favour with these Muscovites. *Les bals masqués* are events of frequent recurrence—held ordinarily, by the way, on Sunday evenings. The main object on such occasions is to “intrigue,” as it is termed, somebody else. “No intriguing, and there is no fun at all,” as I heard a thoroughly Muscovitish lady declare only a few days ago. The lady in question smokes to her heart’s content, a circumstance, however, which does not in the

least militate against her entering heart and soul into all the fun and pleasure attendant upon the frequenting of *bals masqués* to any amount. Dancing is of course one of the entertainments offered on such occasions, but the *élite*, I am told, stand by—do not join therein—and, moreover, it is considered the “proper thing” for ladies who attend these assemblies to be attired in the simplest fashion possible—high black dresses—aught but *décolleté*—being those ordinarily selected and approved. This in the matter of the “upper ten.”

And all the while there seems every chance of war—every one here believes that there is no chance of escape—and who may dare to think what shall be the end thereof?





CHAPTER XX.

THE RUSSIAN CARNIVAL, 1877—TCHERNETCHESKY PEREOULOK—A BRIEF SPACE WITHIN THE WALLS OF THE “ENGLISH CHURCH”—AND DETAILS AS TO THE ENGLISH COLONY, BY PERMISSION.

MOSCOW, FEBRUARY 19TH—
7th, Russian style.

CARNIVAL indeed! One hears of the Roman carnival from time to time, year's end to year's end, and takes all only as a matter of course—associates the return of said season, in fact, simply with the ordinarily gay and extravagant doings recorded annually as taking place in the Eternal City, speaking vividly of yet greater glories known in days gone by.

But with the Russian carnival one is scarcely so well acquainted. And yet such it is. Pleasure and merriment, dainty eating in abundance, and *bals*, “ride ahead” during that one week preceding the long Lenten

fast; every possible preparation is made, as it might seem—I do not presume to say that it is in reality such—for rendering the two modes of following the beaten track of life as opposite as may be.

Blinneys—blinneys—blinneys.

Only that somebody asks, “What in the name of fortune are blinneys?”

I will tell you, then. Thin, flimsy, circular cakes, if you like to call them such, only more after the fashion of the thinnest of possible crumpets, which have been the veriest rage here during the now past seven days. Wherever you went blinneys by the score met your eye. Did you breakfast at twelve—the correct hour—blinneys in profusion were placed before you, wrapped carefully in the most delicate of *serviettes*. But, then, the delicious—for those who like it, by the way—sour cream, or *smittarna*, that accompanies them—the fresh *caviar*, costing, it may be, five shillings per plateful, without which gourmands declare no blinney is complete—also the delicately melted butter! Ah, yes, these are the inevitable *addenda* of blinneys,

and the dish in question is not now quite so simple as it at first appeared. Far from it.

You start off instanter, having swallowed, say, ten or a dozen—this being considered a moderate amount—with the view of calling upon some casual acquaintance, and again you must not say “No” to blinneys and their concomitants.

It is a carnival.

Yes, yes; you understand. Only that—

But your scruples are forthwith overruled.

Your servants at home are eating them by the dozen, to their hearts’ content, and the yearly recurring precedent simply entails utter acquiescence at your hands.

You dine at Gurin’s—the mighty Gurin—he, the superb and finished caterer for the Muscovite’s “inner man;” but Gurin is also marching with the day—would scorn to be behind-hand in aught. Blinneys then face you at every point, and the majestic saloons are crowded, to speak literally, with devourers, the culinary department here being pro-

nounced by *connoisseurs* as perfect. The magnificent organ placed at the extreme end of the main hall is manipulated brilliantly. Mirrors placed on well-nigh all sides reflect the scene; the “waiters” flit gaily about; the hundreds of lounges are all of crimson velvet, and the mode in which the edibles are served is elaborate, fairy-like even—as Eastern a scene on the whole as can well be imagined.

And in the midst of all, every one—stalwart men—ay, and women also—are only eating blinneys! Ridiculous perhaps—only that so it is.

And again, at the late suppers—for supper, in the true sense of the term, is the rule in Moscow—“suppers” at restaurants, breaking well into the following morning. Again I say blinneys rule the roost. The peasants gorge—gorge, at any rate, as far as means permit—for during the coming seven weeks’ fast the diet allowed them is sparse, and they abide rigidly by the prescribed regimen. Animal food will not touch their lips during the entire space, nor milk, nor butter, nor

eggs, and so forth. The same regimen might, I presume, equally avail for the upper class—is, in fact, doubtless prescribed—this on the principle that what is good for the goose is also good for the gander—but with few exceptions the serving-class represent the strictly fasting members of the community. The streets throughout the space named are all alive with the voices of men, if not altogether tipsy, at any rate more than exhilarated, thanks to the imbibing of votky. Eating and drinking are at a premium.

But wait a bit. There is an end to everything—even to blinneys. The hours of the carnival are now riding on apace—the last evening has arrived, and with it hours of contrition. Before the next day has broken all must have sought out their relations, friends, and acquaintances, and asked forgiveness if they have offended them in aught. Such a business! A is coming to B, B to C, C to D, and so on, until the case is tolerably plain that every, even miniature, misunderstanding that has taken place during the past many months will now be effectually and

satisfactorily cleared up. *Chi-peets*—otherwise “tea-fights”—frequently accompany these reconciliation visits.

How pleasant, if such feat were only possible, to feel assured that such, if contending, at any rate ready to forgive parties, would never again enter upon either quarrel or disagreement. But these Russians—I do not see that it is possible to award other verdict—are as exquisitely a contending set as can well be imagined ; will fight out this matter and that in words, until the wonder is that they are not weary of hearing their own voices, only that perhaps even the following day when encountering their, if only verbal, at any rate ardent antagonist of yesterday, they will with inimitable power of—well, then, call it oblivion of thought—altogether seem to forget the fact that aught but the mildest of words have ever been brought into requisition between them. So much for another strong national characteristic.

“I vow, as surely as my name is so and so, that I’ll never cross the threshold of so and so again.” Wonderfully strong expletives

or"—although, again, as I have heard it said, nothing in all reality glitters but gold itself.

Such are some of the "artful attractions" of a *confiseur's* window at this season.

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CHAPTER XX.

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MOSCOW, FEBRUARY 19TH—

7th, Russian style.

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are also probably made use of by way of corroborating the declaration. Most solemn invocations are adopted—the perpetually recurring “*Tchesny Slorva*”—word of honour—and “*parole d’honneur sacré*” being mild expletives, when compared with others in use.

All right—but a prodigious amount of steam and ire expended—and then comes a corresponding amount of reaction. The ire refuses to be harboured, and ’tis easier, by far, to forget and forgive than to keep up the battery *ad infinitum*. What for? as they observe, somewhat caustically. Absurd.

All those solemn invocations, then, only serve, after all, to give an additional fillip to what would without the least doubt be at all times amply exciting without them. The very mode in which ordinary conversation is conducted is in itself suggestive of wrath, even if the subject thereof be of the mildest nature possible. A looker-on, not comprehending the language, would on all occasions be tempted to infer that a desperate quarrel was then and there in hand, the eyes of the speakers flashing fire, their hands

gesticulating fiercely, and their tongues going at the rate of no one knows how many knots an hour. The uninitiated one asks the meaning of all this—it may be tremblingly, if naturally of an anti-warlike turn.

“Don’t alarm yourself; they can’t agree about the quality of the soup yesterday,” is as likely to be the answer as not.

How thankful you feel.

I am touching upon one characteristic of these sons and daughters of Muscovy. Let me touch upon another whilst I am about it—one which makes itself apparent, fairly haunting one, upon all occasions—their extraordinary and certainly fully developed powers as regards unpunctuality. To be one hour late for an appointment here is counted as nothing, to be two ditto only as an event, so-called ordinary. Their church services, to be frank, are the only stated occasions on which I have never known failure. These, as everywhere else, are true to the minute, but in the matter of other appointments, dates of going or coming, dinners, etc., I defy any class of people to be

more irrespective of the laws affecting exactitude. I had the moral resolution to make a business appointment the other day, and was just about to start off, naturally with the amiable desire, as also obvious view, of not keeping the responding party waiting. "Don't hurry yourself in the least," was the somewhat extraordinary observation indulged in by some one standing by. I stared at him. "The time is up—more." "Up! Oh! An hour or two later does just as well in these parts I can assure you; no one ever dreams of being punctual." Time is not money with them, it would seem—nor, indeed, is it. This not, of course, as regards the peasant class, who, perhaps by way of reversing the rule, toil desperately hard, and are good and satisfactory workers into the bargain—will get through twice the amount of business that an ordinary English servant would—only that they will pilfer from you meanwhile—cheat you in every possible way gloriously.

But *revenons à nos moutons*. The carnival is ended, the streets are again quiet, the in-

ebriated and therefore impertinent *eezvostchik* has again resumed a solemn air of patience and resignation to his fate—that of passing the hours of life allotted him amidst hills of ice and snow—and all look exquisitely mild and subdued upon the regimen prescribed for Lenten fast—bread (ordinarily black), porridge, cucumbers, tea and raw onions. If the air be invigorating, scarcely as much can be said for the dietary dictated.

On Monday, the first day, as already said, of season in question, the bells in Moscow and in all its surroundings seemed to be ringing throughout the entire course of each hour, penitential services being largely prescribed. Being told that they were specially attractive, I found my way, at four p.m., as a matter of course, to one of the most celebrated churches.

Quel spectacle! A scene again thoroughly Eastern, such as even the pen of Eastern writer himself must fail in describing adequately. The priests wore vestments of black velvet, the service, of course, was in Slavonic, and one of the most penitential,

I should opine, ever possibly prescribed. Though standing be the rule in the Eastern Church, quite as many knelt, or, rather, lay nearly prostrate, their foreheads touching the ground, and at one portion of the service not a single member of the assemblage maintained other attitude. The effect was strange enough. The difference in the general effect produced by this utter prostration on the extensive matting, instead of our only ordinary kneeling, is very telling, and the instant each has risen to his or her feet, the amount of bowing low and gesticulating, as regards "crossing," enacted seems something wonderful. Scores of isolated small children who were present—standing for the greater part in front of all, and near to the reredos separating the rest of the church from *le grand autel*, or altar, entirely screened from view, excepting when the elaborate gilt doors thereof are thrown open—enacted a like part, as if fully and carefully trained thereto. I am not one who smiles grimly or ironically, as many do, on witnessing all these prostrations and gesticulations. There is simply

nothing special in the proceedings involved, however curious as a *spectacle* to the uninitiated, if one only remembers that in Asiatic climes, of which these assuredly form part, utter prostration is the only prescribed mode of either worship or adoration. Regarded as an act, therefore, it is, under the circumstances, absolutely unfair to denounce it as unduly reverential and so forth. Such is the Eastern mode of even returning thanks for personal favours conferred, or in many cases soliciting them. Due allowance for the rules and customs ordinarily pervading the country of which one takes cognisance, should always be made. Such is the only mode of ever viewing matters fairly. When a member of the Greek Church remains prostrate for several minutes' space, pressing his forehead upon the matted floor of the mighty *sabor*—cathedral—or, it may be, simple church—we only know that his worship is in earnest. When we see the large concourse of people following in each other's track from picture to picture, and from relic to relic, kissing each fervently in turn, and making abject

obaisance to each, we only note a full development of the system of Eastern reverence. An idle task to say "Don't. Be less extravagant in your gestures." They could not express reverence otherwise. Not that such fantastic forms of worship please me personally, but it is ever possible at the same time to make due allowance for the mode of devotion adopted by others.

But again—another picture—as unlike aught English as the most imaginative mind can conjure up. On the tenth of the present month, English style, a custom was celebrated which I fancy I hear many readers denouncing as "most strange"—"out of place." Not at all, however, if they endeavour to bear in mind the Russian character and temperament, which is in each item as unlike our own, I aver, as is probably the nature of those quartered at the Antipodes. Impulsive and demonstrative, both in seasons of grief and joy—their sensational emotions as a rule tolerably evanescent, all in proportion to the amount of excitement first permitted to find vent on the occurrence of the event rousing

them into action—take if only these points into consideration, and then indulge in deduction.

On the day in question, every cemetery becomes a scene of what may be at least termed sociability, if not conviviality. Whole families cluster round the graves of those whom they have “loved and lost,” indulging meanwhile in the universal *chi-peet*—or, it may be, in votky-drinking. I have heard it averred by some that the “dear dead” would like thus to be remembered, associated as it were with those who are left behind, but the scene presents an inexpressibly strange aspect to English eyes. *Samavars*—without which no Russian ever dreams of preparing “the cup which cheers,” though “not inebriates,” abound on the “ground” by scores and hundreds.

The cemeteries around Moscow form at all times, however, an important and also exquisite feature in the scene. Beautifully situated, and, as a rule, most beautifully cared for, they cannot fail curiously to interest the stranger coming from foreign lands.

Wreaths, *immortelles*, in conjunction with handsome monuments, cluster thickly on all sides, and in summer-time the loveliest of flowers. But the cross is the one pervading emblem; epitaphs, too, as everywhere else, abound.

I found my way the other day across one of the most glorious plains, thickly covered with snow, and plunging deep at every step; then plunged into a glorious pine-forest, entirely out of the sight of man and "alike beast," it seemed; but, as it presently proved, if not with the living, at least I was surrounded by the quiet dead. I found myself all at once in the midst of an extensive cemetery, the priest's wooden house built off a little on one side, and the church connected with said cemetery, topped by minarets and gilded domes, rising boldly out of the very midst of the pines. Who would have thought it? Who expected it? Certainly I did not.

I glanced up and down the long snow-dressed avenues in all directions, strolled in and out amidst the tombstones, and was followed slowly, at a distance at first, by a reve-

rend and grey-bearded priest, who courteously pointed out to me the most marked points of interest. But, to be frank, I liked wandering there best alone. I delight in the perfect isolation which of necessity attends the stranger wandering amidst such scenes in frozen Muscovitish regions. One forgets—how delightfully—that there is such a thing as worry and turmoil in the world, and breathes freely.

Not one of all that host of pine trees seemed ever to have been uprooted to make place for the many graves lying beneath. No, there they grew as they had once been planted, this tree mounting guard at the foot, that at the head, a third and fourth rearing their heads within the railed vault itself, and the boughs all meeting thickly above—shrouding “God’s Acre.” What it may all look like in summer time I do not know—this special cemetery I mean, cut off as it seemed from all the world beside; but I do know that I should ever like it best in the white winter season, as I saw it for the first time the other day. No wall, or even iron railing,

skirts it. I wandered onwards, in and out, not knowing where the end might be, and all at once there came an end thereof. I had again skirted the forest—also the cemetery—and to my surprise again stood on the verge of glorious plain number two, extending well-nigh as far as the eye could reach on all sides.

But such is Moscow and its surroundings—when away from the heart of the city itself; and yet even the city portion is replete with naught but objects of ancient interest.

Forest upon forest—plain upon plain—ice-hills without number—and minarets and domes rising up triumphantly in the centre of all. Fit picture for an artist, truly, at every point of the compass.

And in one of the very centres, in a quiet street leading out of the Great Tverskaiya—Tchernetchefsky Pereoulok—stands the English Church, already referred to—a simple building, truly; but the services of the same—conducted by the Rev. R. G. Penny—not only fully appreciated on Sundays, but fairly on holy days, as also Wednesdays and Fri-

days during Lent. English residents have indeed cause to be adequately grateful. With the exception of Heidelberg never has it fallen to my lot to meet in any continental town with a "home" church service so perfectly conducted. The sermon preached there on the first Sunday in the present year by the—well, then, why not rector?—at any rate he speaks of his parish, and looks as carefully after each parishioner, ay, and more so often-times than is the wont even in old England—gave a detailed and interesting account of the progress made by the "English colony" here throughout the course of the past year. The relation seems to have interested the members of the colony not a little. Why not, therefore, those at home? I venture to quote, having obtained permission to do so:—

"It will be a source of thankfulness for you to know that the year which has just closed has been, in our little community, an exceptionally healthy one. Fourteen only of our members have been removed by death, the eldest of whom attained the ripe age of

seventy-eight years, the youngest being an infant of nine days. If we estimate our colony within this city as consisting of a number varying between five and six hundred souls—as, on careful computation, I think we may—we cannot but regard the deaths during the period named as below the average. The average term of life amongst those who have been taken was twenty-seven years, eight of their number being children and six adults. Two of the latter only reached the three score years and ten, mentioned by the Psalmist as the limit of human life. But our gains, as usual, exceed our losses. Thirty-six infants have been added to our number in holy baptism, a number including not only those born actually within the boundaries of the city, but also those children of English parents who have been born in the surrounding districts. Five marriages have been celebrated in our church. It must be borne in mind, however, that the number of marriages actually solemnised within these walls does not, in every case, exactly represent the whole number that have taken place—this

for the simple reason that in the case of English persons marrying Russians the ceremony in the Russian Church is legally sufficient, so that very often the marriage does not take place in the English Church at all. I am happy to say that in three out of these five marriages both bride and bridegroom were English. I am persuaded that, on the whole, mixed marriages are undesirable, and that the effect upon the children of such marriages is in the highest degree unfavourable. The father belongs to one Church, the mother to another, and the result too often is that, practically, the children grow up to belong to none, the family in many cases—I do not say in all—presenting the sad spectacle of ‘a house divided against itself’ on that very point which ought to be the strongest and holiest means of drawing families together, and of leading them to ‘stand fast together in one spirit.’

“The year has been marked by one event which should hardly pass by without notice. I allude to the confirmation held here in the spring, when thirty-five candi-

dates dedicated themselves solemnly to God in that holy ordinance, making a total of one hundred and eighty-five at the three confirmations which have taken place since the beginning of my ministry among you, eleven years ago. It will, I think, be a pleasure to you to know that both the bishops who have confirmed here in late years retain a particularly pleasant recollection of Moscow and its English colony. From the Bishop of Moray and Ross I received a letter only last night, in which he says, 'Give my kindest regards to all your congregation, who live in my memory.'

"There have been, during the last year, twenty-three Celebrations, with an average of twenty-three communicants on each occasion, against twenty-one Celebrations in the previous year, with an average of twenty-one communicants. The various services have been conducted with the same regularity, and I think, on comparing notes with other places, that we have good reason to be proud of our Church singing; but I should *like* to make it better still, and would remind

you that in no way can you employ your voices better, or with greater pleasure to yourselves and others, than in assisting in the service of the Church. With regard to the monthly offertory, I regret to say that in the past year the expenditure has exceeded the receipts by nearly 200 roubles. There have been some special calls upon it, it is true. One person was sent to England, and two others were buried, out of that fund. . . .

“Persons also apply for loans from time to time from this source, knowing that in this case there is no publicity. Four persons are regularly pensioned in part from the offertory fund, and as meanness is decidedly not one of the faults of our community I feel that I have only to mention this for you to respond, with your accustomed generosity, to the appeal made.

“As regards the circumstances of our community generally, I fear that they are not at present very hopeful. Few people are making money, and most are losing it. From various causes, notably, amongst others, the slackness of trade, sources of employment for

English people are becoming gradually fewer in this country. Many excellent governesses have been months out of situations. This is a state of things which I am afraid it is impossible for us, personally, in any way, to remedy: but, at any rate, we can dissuade any of our friends who may ask our advice as to the desirability of coming out to Russia for the purpose of seeking a livelihood. The disturbed state of European politics, we may trust and pray, will soon give way to a more peaceful state of things, and we may then hope that the present stagnation of trade may be followed by a corresponding reaction. Meanwhile matters continue gloomy enough, and we can only leave the issue to Him Who ordereth all things well.

“There is one sad circumstance I may mention here, in passing, which, though only affecting us indirectly, may well call forth our sympathies. It is, thank God, a comparatively rare thing for any of our community to come within the hard grasp of the law, but, unhappily, there is at present here *an English prisoner*, who has been sentenced

to be sent to Siberia for life. You may rest assured that every effort is being made in the proper quarter, to interfere on his behalf. Meanwhile I commit him to your prayers and sympathies. In such a case as this we feel the misfortune keenly—it indirectly affects ourselves, seeing that in a small community like our own, planted in the heart of a foreign land, many of our joys and sorrows become, almost necessarily, common property.”





CHAPTER XXI.

THE DECLARATION OF WAR BY RUSSIA, MADE WITHIN
THE KREMLIN—THE PICTURE FINISHES WITH A
GENTLER STRAIN—LAVROFSKY—AN EVENING IN
THE NOBILITIES' HALL—AND THE GREAT THEATRE.

MOSCOW, APRIL 25TH—

13th, Russian style, 1877.

At last !

Yes ; after all these many months of watching and waiting—after patience has been well-nigh exhausted, business transactions and trade of every sort been at a comparative standstill, and landed property that had already, unfortunately, fallen into the market has lain fallow and been valueless, because unsaleable—after all this, I say, the crisis has arrived. War has been declared—but only yesterday.

At one o'clock p.m. the announcement reached Moscow by “ wire ” that the Imperial behest had gone forth, and at two o'clock—



Vincent Brooks, lith.

RUSSIAN NURSE.

within the lapse of a single hour, mark you—a million of roubles had been voluntarily contributed by the citizens, in conjunction with several hundred beds, with the view of thus not only lending a helping hand in supplying the sinews of war, but also of aiding the many who must inevitably fall sick and wounded in the, it is to be feared, mighty conflict.

Never before, to be frank, have I known Muscovites so prompt in the execution of an act of duty.

And then there was but one universal watchward everywhere—that not only the Imperial Manifesto was to be read the following day—that on which I now write you—in each of the nearly six hundred churches here, as well as everywhere else wherein Russian rule holds sway—but that the Imperial mandate also was that at the same hour—two o'clock p.m.—a solemn service was to be held, praying for blessing upon the arms of the Muscovitish troops.

Everywhere, I was told, precisely the same imposing ceremonial would be enacted—

everywhere, I was told, each church would be alike packed—but preferring, as a stranger in these regions, to be in the thickest of the fray, and feeling assured that the scene presented at the Kremlin would be replete with infinitely greater attractions than elsewhere, I joined the throng and made the best of my way towards the turreted and richly denizenized enclosure.

Mounting the steep ascent and alighting before the main and massive gates giving entrance to the extensive court-yard, I glanced around.

The *spectacle* was superb—the view of the many domed and gaily “minaretted” city, extending panorama-fashion on the north, west, and southern sides, indescribably beautiful, presenting, as if by way of contrast to the present stormy condition of men’s minds, an aspect of the most perfect peace.

But the aspect on the left! On its own hilly site lay grouped the glorious cluster, each and all constituting themselves portions of that one great whole—the sacred “story-taught” Kremlin. Cathedrals—those of the

Assumption, of the Archangel Michael, and of the Annunciation, standing out pre-eminently—Churches, the Imperial Palace, the two monasteries, Voznesevsky and Tcherdoff respectively, the building containing the patriarchal library and treasury, and the arsenal, guarded it might seem formidably on one side by the no small amount of cannon, ranged in rows, captured from Napoleon in the struggle of 1812.

The picture, as regarded the last-named item, was suggestive in many aspects, but still more so was the attitude assumed on the present occasion, as also verbiage employed, by many of the sons of Muscovy now mounting the terrace. They stood stock-still for several minutes, pointing and gesticulating in the direction of those heavy, but, nevertheless, once captured weapons. The action bespoke more, far, than any words ever could. It reminded one vividly of that story of the past; it prompted one also to look ahead into the future.

But I am not going to talk of cannon now—only of that which is its sure precursor, the

utterance of a solemn manifesto by an Imperial potentate in his ancient capital, that the gauntlet has been thrown down at last. Within the massive gates, therefore—past the Cathedral of the Annunciation, wherein, by the way, the Tsars were formerly baptised and married—past that of the Archangel Michael, wherein, also *en passant*, the Tsars were in former times buried, from the time of Ivan Valita, grandson of Alexander Neosky, until the accession of Peter the Great—and then beneath the portals of the Cathedral of the Assumption, or to adopt the true phraseology—“ Ouspensky Sabor ”—in which the Tsars are always crowned.

A pathway had been cleared towards the latter amidst the many thousands present—some even named as many as 50,000. Soldiers lined the way—and thus the notabilities, military and civil, entered ; gorgeously white-plumed generals and officers, whose swords and spurs shone brilliantly in the sun and seemed even then ready for service.

And then came a shout—a prolonged and hearty huzzaing from sturdy Muscovitish

lungs. The carriage of the Governor-General, Dolgorouky, was already dashing up. And what a welcome !

But the scene within. A *kneeling* service, even for the priest, was that specially prescribed for the occasion, and only those can fully appreciate the force of such a service in the matter of aspect and mental impression who realise the fact that in the Eastern Church standing, as before observed, is the prevailing rule, or, at the most solemn parts of the ceremonial, utter prostration upon the matting-covered floor, kneeling being only enjoined, occasionally, upon the Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent.

And now not a knee remained unbent—and the Royal proclamation found expression in words, amidst breathless silence on the part of those who listened, at the lips of the officiating priest.

The multitudes in the surrounding courtyard pressed onwards still more closely, the streets leading thereto were thronged, the bells of all the churches rang out their very loudest and merriest, no matter how discord-

antly—but above all sounded the monster bell of John the Great—Ivan Viliki—almost enough to deafen those who listened. And this, too, within the space designated “Kremlin,” be it also remembered.

Placards were attached to every post—hoisted in every conspicuous place—announcing the heart-stirring proclamation, and in many quarters it was a case of “shoulder to shoulder” as to who should be the first to begin to read each aloud for the benefit of, it might be, the entire group standing near—for the benefit, yet more certainly, of the large and numerous class of Muscovites to whom the respective arts of reading and writing are only as myths.

The streets are ere this one blaze of flags and decorations. The Russian nation has at last obtained that for which it has been crying out for months’ past; and though of course one hears at every point of the compass that “war is a terrible thing,” and vivid pictures are drawn of all its horrors, the fact is tolerably self-evident that nothing short of war would have served to satisfy

the national, by which I mean people's, outcry.

A change indeed o'er the spirit of things in general. We are all now beginning to shake ourselves, so to speak, and wake up from a long winter's dream, in which deep snow and impenetrable ice have figured as the most prominent features—and with that waking up are aroused also to the note that tells of battle straight ahead. A dreary, startling sound, indeed, portending only death and havoc unutterable.

But dreariness is not the pervading word here, by any means. It would rather seem as if only a vista of glory and additional triumph was about to be opened out to every son of Muscovy. Few dream of the possibility of defeat. All are curiously sanguine. The end remains to be seen.

All I know for certain is that Moscow and its inhabitants are to-day, to all appearances, no more either the same place or people that they were two brief days ago, than does the suddenly breaking spring resemble the long frozen more than six months' winter.

The mobilization of troops *viâ* the Moscow and Brest railway is going on at a rapid rate—and, to descend to trivialities, even the face of that national institution, the very *eezvostchik*, has undergone a change, and beams suggestively. The Empress has sent 30,000 roubles out of her own private purse, the Princess Dagmar 10,000, and each of the Imperial Princes a like amount—60,000 roubles in all. Where will the enthusiasm cease if this is only the beginning thereof?

The sentiments pronounced as regards the Turkish Power can of course be imagined—but those proffered *sans* the least solicitation by all classes of the Muscovitish community bearing reference to England are, if possible, stronger. “It is the English who are to be blamed for all this,” I hear muttered on all sides. “They might have prevented the war easily enough.”

At least they do not seem to undervalue the efficacy of English power.

The “Moscow Gazette,” the leading paper here, contained a spirited article in last Sunday’s edition, purporting to reply, it would

seem, to an article appearing recently in the "Times," touching not only Russian tactics, but indulging in several somewhat strong asseverations respecting Russian temperament, and also, so to speak, Russian idiosyncrasies. The verbiage was certainly strong and piquant.

And with war on our heels—to be restrained within what limits it is quite impossible to say, for matters look gloomy enough and blank in the vista—I will endeavour to finish my present Moscow picture in a gentler, and more peaceful strain.

If arms are clashing in the distance, art is still finding votaries in this ancient city. Madame Lavrofsky, or, to supply her now proper title, the Princess Zeerteleff—"the people's darling," as I heard it expressed the other day, and I scarcely wonder—is now here, and has given two concerts in the Nobilities' Hall, which served to call down plaudits and bouquets *en masse*. Her rendering of the "Erl King" was a marvel of excellence. At least a dozen times she was encored, although not acceding to the request.

more than twice. Rubenstein "accompanied" her. She was educated in the Institution here, so that even before winning her laurels she was closely associated with Moscow.

As for the "Nobilities' Hall," it bears comparison with few other concert-rooms. The acoustic arrangements are admirable, the architecture is of the Corinthian order, and the plan of the orchestra considerably different in character from that of our assembly halls. No space is left behind it for "shilling" spectators, entirely marring the general *coup d'œil*, as in some of our English concert-rooms, and the orchestra itself is well and fully covered with performers. Very little blank ground, serving to render the spectator chilly and uncomfortable, and suggesting the vague notion that all the members of the orchestra have not yet arrived.

Rubenstein, of such Russian reputation, was in full force, as was also Signor Rossi at the Great Theatre, as it is termed, four evenings ago—his *rôle* being "Macbeth"—given, of course, in Italian. But of the Great

Theatre another time. I have already missed a post in despatching my account of the reading, also of the reception here, of the Imperial Manifesto.





CHAPTER XXII.

THE INTERIOR OF A RUSSIAN AMBULANCE.

Moscow, AUGUST 30TH—

18th, Russian style, 1877.

I HAVE to-day witnessed what was in itself alone worth a trip to “Holy Moscow”—the ceremony of blessing the splendid line of ambulances, the gift of the Grand Duchess Constantine, at a cost of 50,000 roubles. It was fully expected by the enthusiastic and, at this moment, terribly anxious citizens, that the Imperial lady would have been present on the important occasion, witnessed the completing stroke, so to speak, of her deed of generosity—notice, indeed, to such effect had been officially given—but a telegram from St. Petersburg, at the eleventh hour, announced formally that the decision in question had been reversed.

The ceremony was of course to be celebrated *within* the handsome Smolensky railway

station, the terminus of the Brest and Moscow line, and thither I hastened betimes, so as to have a good view of the entire proceedings. Of the interior of the ambulances and all their equipments, I had obtained special permission to have a private view afterwards, partly for the sake of the deep and personal interest which it is impossible not to feel in all that is now going on around, and partly with the view of being enabled to detail accurately for the benefit of friends at home.

The building was thronged, not only with railway officials, but with regimental and naval officers, their wives and families; whilst behind them stood peasants, in their picturesque gaily-coloured costumes, clustering thickly. But the interest in the scene, as presented, rested not upon either the one point referred to or the other. Far from it. The main interest attaching thereto resulted from the again Eastern character of the entire *spectacle*—and such Eastern character—how often have I declared this—can only be adequately pictured by those who have once been personal witnesses of its full de-

velopment. Then—and only then—such scenes are engraved upon the memory, never to be effaced as long as the faculty in question holds good.

A long, narrow line of way was kept clear throughout the entire length of the building, the “packed” throng standing to the right and left. At the top of the long line, or avenue, placed somewhat aloft within view of every one, reposed the “holy picture”—if I am not misinformed, brought direct from the holy Tverskaiya chapel—and before this stood the impromptu altar, covered with silver dishes containing holy water, holy because “blessed” pictures, and other treasures—the entire improvised alcove being brilliantly lighted up with wax tapers, and the surroundings adorned with lovely shrubs. Right and left, with folded hands, one wearing a robe adorned with white silver tissue, the other being attired in white and yellow, stood two of the Kremlin priests, only awaiting the arrival of Prince Dolgorouky and some of the other leading personages.

Right and left also stood the Sisters of

Charity about to accompany the ambulances in the capacity of nurses, wearing black dresses, white bibs and aprons, with the well-known red cross displaying itself conspicuously upon the sleeve of the right arm. The faces of nearly all were interesting-looking—the hair being drawn back carefully beneath the pure white square handkerchief fastened beneath the chin of each—and the whole picture was curiously and pleasantly suggestive of sweet womanly aid being ready at hand the instant it was required.

But now came a stir. Prince Dolgorouky had arrived, attended by his suite, and accompanied by generals and other officers, many of whom had grown “grey” in their country’s service.

The procession filed up the avenue, and then began the glorious Russian chanting, praying, as a matter of course, for a blessing upon the Russian arms, a blessing upon the Emperor and all associated with him, either by family ties or by those of patriotism, the last-named sentiment now inducing only warfare, but they would fain hope, in the end,

glory—then rose to Heaven, uttered by the voices of the choir, consisting of men' and boys, the notes of the "Cherubical Hymn," beginning with "Let us, the cherubim mystically imaging,"—and then the stentorian voiced deacon was alone heard, more like a voice of thunder than aught else it seemed.

The mode in which these Russian deacons' voices rise and fall—by gradation most difficult as it would appear—the listener meanwhile wondering how much higher or lower their voices can possibly go—is almost incredible of belief to the uninitiated. But then, as if by way of contrast—the chanting itself! How fascinating! The congregation do not join therein, as is the case in the Latin and Western Churches, but take solemn part nevertheless in each portion of the service, bending low repeatedly, as before narrated, touching the ground with their foreheads, and using the sign of the cross incessantly, on the repetition of every "Amen," as well as on other occasions.

A pause now in the proceedings, and then the entire *cortège* had filed out to march along-

side the line of carriages, the priests scattering holy water upon each as they passed along.

We entered now at the extreme end of the long line—had passed within the portals, and were instantly in the centre of a once visited, never to be forgotten ambulance.

But how comfortably and thoughtfully arranged for the poor wounded, even if convalescent, soldier. Twelve luxurious-looking easy-chairs, ranged on either side of each compartment, and facing the centre, convertible at a minute's notice into long soft beds, covered with material of a wholesome looking texture—striped red and white. A strip of carpeting running the entire length of the train ; a small table by the side of each bed, two of them being chess-tables—some three or four books being also placed thereon for the delectation of those fortunate enough to possess a knowledge of the art of reading ; the veritable brass “ Russian washing-stand,” affixed in one corner, by pressing lightly upon the knob of which water spouts out *ad libitum* from the top of the machine, fountain-fashion,

so to speak, upon the individual standing beneath desiring ablution ; the also inevitable “ *samavar* ” occupying another corner, capable of holding its forty or fifty cups of boiling water, and destined to supply tea for the future in all possible quantities and at all hours of the day as well as night ; the holy picture—the Russian *penates*, as it might be termed—hanging up at the farther end—or occasionally, on one side, in the very centre, with lighted oil lamp, of red or green colour probably, burning before it—such are some of the inevitable *addenda* of a Russian ambulance.

At the door of this, number one ambulance, only for the use of convalescents, stood a Sister of Mercy—waiting it might seem for the next portion of the story, which would indeed pourtray a very different scene. We exchanged the customary Russian greeting—the “ *Zdrastee*,” or “ Good-day,”—and passed on to ambulance number two, precisely fitted up as the last, and alike guarded, as it were, by a “ red-crossed ” sister.

Ambulance number four brought us, however, into a somewhat different scene. We were now in the quarter that would ultimately be apportioned to the wounded officers. Soft, comfortable spring-beds lying alongside the carriage—again I speak nautically—in threes, if one may be permitted the expression, on either side, one above the other, something after the fashion of a man-of-war, only that here the space permitted to each denizen was considerably greater.

On each bed the linen was of the whitest, the counterpanes being of a light bright colour, as if by way of contrast, and a complete set of new personal underclothing, including, I even noticed, socks and netted night-caps, lay in readiness, carefully folded, by the side of each pillow. From the head of each bed hung suspended from the topmost railing thereof—as is ever the custom with all faithful members of this portion of the Greek Church—attached by, ordinarily, a blue silk ribbon—a small “blessed” gold, it might be only gilt, cross; but, with such

exception, the equipments of this compartment were pretty much the same as those already described.

A fifth ambulance presented a like aspect, again from twelve to eighteen beds, thus caparisoned, meeting our view; but the sixth was differently equipped. The ambulances now for the poor wounded Russian soldier, who the chances are, omitting of course the fact that he was lying there maimed it might be—God alone only knew—for the entire remainder of his life—had never once before been surrounded by such thorough comfort. The beds, still arranged in the same fashion, were now, however, covered with dark brown rugs, and the complete supply of new undergarments was of commoner, and, therefore, more suitable texture. How many wounded, weary human frames, I mused, would ere long be laid upon those beds, many of them never to rise again.

We passed through several such ambulances—alas, how many would be needed—and then stood in the midst of one in which each bed lay upon a sort of tressels, with

handles at each end, by means of which it could be easily lifted up and carried away.

“For the dangerously wounded,” explained our guide. He might as well have inserted “mortally.” Yes; it was easy to understand that this identical ambulance, as others of like character which we presently entered, would be in frightful requisition within a short space of time. A week—ten days’ journey at most—will suffice to bring it to the scene of action.

Again we passed on. Another ambulance—but now that specially devoted to the Sisters of Mercy, for their own use. Six beds ranged in each of the small, now enclosed compartments, in again three-decker fashion, each in the most perfect order. We peeped in as a matter of course. There lay on each white bed the small portmanteau allotted to each, containing the needful amount of gear permitted her. Each “sister,” I am told, in addition to her food, receives an allowance of 30 roubles a month—nearly £4, not making allowance for the present fearful depreciation in the value of English gold—and so she

ought. Her various personal equipments are duly prescribed.

In the centre of the Sisters' diminutive dormitories, stood the sleeping compartment, as also miniature writing-room in which to give formal directions, and so forth, to those in attendance, of the lady in charge of the entire staff. Then came other departments in this excellently-arranged ambulance train, extending to the utmost permitted length—nearly forty carriages—each department being specially designated on the door leading thereto. The doctors' sleeping apartment, to call the space allotted it by any name so pretentious; that apportioned to the director, specially in charge of the entire train; the next carriage—a general dining-room, wherein all assembled for meals; the next, the surgery, wherein the doctors already stood as if fully prepared for work, and with every appliance of surgery, also items of medical requirement, ranged around the walls, so to speak.

The order in which everything was arranged seemed infectious.

And then came the last department, but nevertheless not the least needful—the delightfully furnished kitchen division, with its true Russian stove in the centre, at which preparations for cooking were already in hand.

Such was the interior of the ambulance train—*en route* for the scene of such dire carnage. It starts to-night, with its freight of kindly helpers. May Heaven prosper its course!

The excitement here relative to the seven days' desperate fighting before the entrance to the all-important and much talked-of "defile" is very profound.

"Another fire last night." But to such words one becomes pretty well accustomed. Such a catastrophe here every night is the rule, not the exception; it being reckoned that one event at least of the kind may be safely reckoned upon within each circlet formed by the hours of darkness. Notice that any conflagration is then and there in hand is always duly heralded to the inhabitants, even though not specially interested in

the same as regards personal safety. A lighted lantern is instantly suspended from the tower belonging to each of the *quartiers* into which the city is divided, and thus silently, but not the less surely, the news spreads.





CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DEPARTURE OF THE IMPERIAL GUARDS—AND
WITH THEIR DEPARTURE ANOTHER ADIEU TO
MOSCOW.

MOSCOW, SEPTEMBER 11TH—
August 30th, Russian style, 1877.

EXCITEMENT here is now a veritable epidemic. Go where you will, charity-boxes, designating the purpose for which alms are solicited, and each boasting the bright crimson cross stamped on a pure white surface, meet your eye. They are affixed to the walls of the various *oelitzas*, or roads, traversing this mighty city; they greet you at the entrance of every church and cathedral; do you happen to enter "Gurin's" or any other fashionable place of resort, the probability is that your charity, as heretofore, is instantly demanded by some member of the fair sex, who, duly escorted, still takes upon herself

the duty of "begging" in this particular district. The topic of—as also endless incidents attendant upon—this deplorable war meets one at every point—in the lowest *peeteny-dom*, or drinking-house; in every shop; in the very *droshtky* which one hires, the *eezvostchik* directing its course being invariably well versed in the latest phases of the combat.

To-day a fresh impetus has been given by the departure from Moscow, after a two days' stay here, of a portion of the Imperial Guards from St. Petersburg, *en route* for the field—were it not better to say many fields,—of battle. This body, numbering about thirty-six hundred officers and soldiers, was despatched from the modern capital in instalments of six hundred men each. The Guards, it must be remembered, constitute the flower and pride of the Russian army, and it is impossible that they could ever be regarded in any other light. A veritable set of giants, so to speak, they one and all appeared, clad in their rough brown winter gear, with heavy top-boots, and carrying heavy

knapsacks with superfluous pairs of nailed high boots strapped thereon.

The organisation of the Imperial Guard dates from the reign of the most autocratic of the Tsars. Peter the Great, left fatherless at an early age, spent his childhood in the village of Preobragensky, situated not many versts from Moscow, where his greatest delight, as he grew in years, was to assemble the youths of the village and train them into a fighting corps, constituting himself their captain. But the youthful hero was not content with this venture. He also made friends with the boys of the neighbouring village—Semenevsky by name—and assembled them in like fashion. Hence the names attached to the first and second regiments of the *Infanterie de la Garde*—Preobragensky and Semenevsky. In after-life Peter retained the rank in early days thus self-assumed, remaining captain of his favourite Preobragensky regiment.

The *Infanterie de la Garde* consists of three divisions, each comprising four regiments. The first division, besides the two

already named, includes the regiments designated Ismailovsky and the Chasseurs de la Garde. The regiments of the second division are named, respectively, Pavlovsky, Les Grenadiers de la Garde, Moscovsky, and De Finlande. The third division embraces the Volensky and Letovsky regiments, as also those dubbed L'Empereur d'Autriche and L'Empereur de Prusse. The cavalry has also three divisions, the first comprising the four regiments named Les Chevaliers de la Garde, Les Gardes à Cheval, Les Cuirassiers de l'Empereur and Les Cuirassiers de l'Impératrice ; the second, Les Hussards de l'Empereur, Les Lanciers du Grand Duc Nicolas, Les Grenadiers à Cheval, and Les Dragons de l'Empereur ; and the third, two regiments, Les Lanciers de l'Empereur and Les Hussards de Grodno.

Soon after six o'clock a.m., on a bleak and rainy morning, I drove in a horribly shaky and shabby *droszky* to another railway terminus, many miles away, where the soldiers were gathered, many of them accompanied by friends and near relations, prin-

cipally, however, women—mothers, wives and children. Nearly all were seated on the wide platforms stretching in various directions. They sat in clusters, some drinking the inevitable “*chi*”—others *votky*. The majority of those assembled were talking fast and gesticulating vigorously. Many, however, were singing and shouting, out of sheer bravado, as it seemed. “Yes, they would meet their fate thus. It were better, far, than weeping; and there were but two alternatives: why choose the last named?”

One bronze-featured Muscovite specially attracted my notice. A burst of noisy song—little short of a scream in fact—came from his lips ever and anon, alternating with a stormy burst of laughter or a sudden flow of tears. I watched him with considerable interest. This, I reflected, was, indeed, a type of the well-nigh universal Russian temperament—sad to-day, gay to-morrow: in the very depths of despair one moment, brimming over with joy the next.

But there were other groups; and herein lay another characteristic feature in the

picture. Here and there a soldier was endeavouring to drown not only his own personal feelings, but also those of the surrounding circle, by plunging into all the wild vagaries of the "Russian dance;" and furiously his arms as well as legs worked in the endeavour to do full justice to the famous national jig.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" rang cheerily from the lips of many around, still struggling hard with their tears. "Apait! apait!" "Again! again!"

Knapsacks lay scattered all around. The troops were all ready to be summoned at a single word and packed into the various carriages, or rather vans, holding an average number of thirty-five. Alongside the station stood another regiment, newly arrived, and waiting to take the place of that which was now about to start.

We passed slowly along the line, glancing at the many heavily-laden waggons, and then at compartment after compartment filled with fine-looking but highly-disconcerted *horses*, rebelling vigorously at the restric-

tions as regarded space now imposed upon them.

“I declare I am as utterly sorry for the horses as for the men,” exclaimed a soft-hearted Russian lady. “To think of the poor dumb brutes all going thus helplessly to their fate!”

A tent erected for the officers and their friends stood on our left, and, forming part of a privileged party, we entered it. A long table, supplied with the daintiest of viands, provided gratis by the citizens, extended through its entire length. Many ladies were present, some weeping bitterly. Few waited for a formal introduction before exchanging words. “Your son, madame?—it is from him you are about to part?”—“And my husband, madame.” This in response. “All my other sons are there already. May God help and protect them!”—“Amen!” is the involuntary answer.

The officers—most of them chatting, and many of them even laughing gaily—are drinking wine, exchanging felicitations and good-wishes, and touching glasses across the

table. In the midst of all I spied a mouse—a tame one, surely—careering about at pleasure.

But in another minute the aspect of affairs had changed. The word of command had suddenly been given, the officers marched out, the troops crouched in such numbers on the platforms rose promptly to their feet, grasping their knapsacks; and then the women's arms were bound fast around the necks of those stepping, now fast, according to orders, into the carriages immediately facing them. The notes of the Russian hymn rose and fell from time to time, many of the voices being more than half choked.

In flocked all, the sobbing women left behind, with heads wrapped up in the thick woollen Russian shawl or extemporised *bashlik*, “crossing” their departing friends three times in earnest and true orthodox fashion, praying Heaven to bless them. And then all waited—all was ready: the long line of carriages was already moving off.

“*Preicheit!*” “Good-bye!” rose from the lips of those around; but the word was quickly

supplemented by another, infinitely more suggestive of pleasantness—" *Dussveedinia!* "—" *Au revoir!* "—which was echoed again and again.

The train moved now more quickly. The soldiers shouted, cried and laughed alternately, waving their caps in signal of adieu. "What matters it?" shouted one. "We must all die once." The officers grasped firmly the hands of those yet marching bare-headed by their side along the platform; the lonely women left behind, many of them grey-headed, fell in some instances senseless on the ground.

But I, too, must now quit Russian soil—bid adieu to "Russian pictures," with how many regrets—regrets, too, at using the word on behalf of those who have only permitted general courtesy and kindness to be exceeded by universal hospitality.

"*Preicheit*," then, picture-like and beautiful Moscow—or shall it be only "*Dussveedinia?*"

THE END.

[illegible]



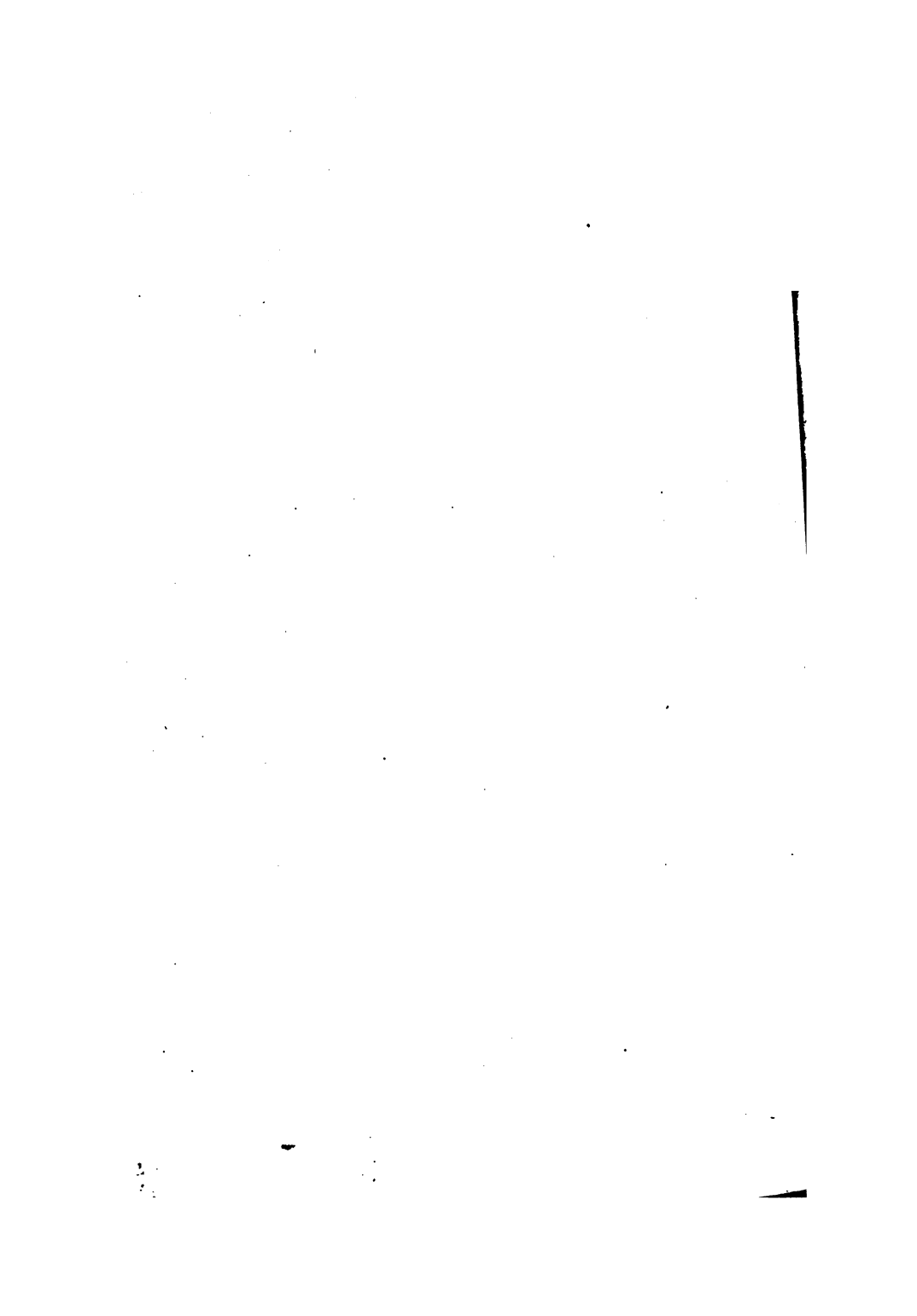
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